

REFLECTIONS
UPON
LEARNING

BY
Monsieur DE FENELON,
Archbishop of Cambray.

Made English from the Paris Edition,
By Mr. OZELL.

To which is added,
An ESSAY concerning HUMOUR in
COMEDY, by Mr. CONGREVE.

L O N D O N,

Printed for E. CURLL, at the Dial and Bible
over-against St. Dunstan's Church in Fleet-Street.
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REFLECTIONS UPON LEARNING.

I AM ashamed Sir, to be so long indebted to you for an Answer; but my ill state of Health and continual hurry of Affairs were the Cause of that Delay. The Choice the Academy has made of You to be their *Perpetual Secretary*, † is worthy the Society, and has a very promising aspect for the promotion of polite Learning. I confess the demand you send me in the name of a Body to whom I am so much bound, gives me some perplexity. But let the Consequence be what it will, I will venture to speak my Thoughts, since it is required of me; I shall do it with a great distrust of my own Capacity and a sincere deference for those who are pleased to consult me.

† This Letter is written to Monsieur Fontenelle.

A PLAN for compleat- ing the Dictionary.

THE Dictionary, which the Academy is forming, does certainly deserve to be compleated. It is true, that Use which often alters the living Languages, may change what this Dictionary shall have settled.

*Nedum sermonum stet bonos, & gratia vivax.
Multa renascentur que jam cecidere, cademq;
Qua nunc sunt in honore vocabula, si voler Usus,
Quem penes arbitrium est & Jus & norma
loquendi.*

Horat. Art Poet. Ver. 69. & seq.

*Why then should Words challenge Eternity
When greatest Men, and greatest Actions dye?
Use may revive the obsoletest Words,
And banish those that now are most in Vogue;
Use is the Judge, the Law, and Rule of Speech.*
Rosc. Transl.

But still this Dictionary will have several Uses. It will be a help to Foreigners, who



who are very curious of our Tongue; and who read with profit the excellent Books in several kinds, that are written in *France*. Besides the most polite even among the *French* may sometimes have occasion to consult this Dictionary upon Words which they think doubtful. Lastly, when our Language is altered, it will serve to explain the Books now, that are worthy of Posterity. Are we not at this Day obliged to translate the Language of *Villehardouin* and of *Joinville*? What a pleasure wou'd it be to us to see a *Greek* or *Latin Dictionary* Compiled by the Ancients themselves. The perfecting of *Dictionaries* is a point, wherein the Moderns may be owned to have improved upon the Ancients. In time the advantage will be found of having a *Dictionary* that may be as a Key to so many good Books. The Value of this Work cannot fail to increase in proportion as it grows old.

II.

It were to be wished that a *French Grammar* were added to the *Dictionary*. It wou'd be a great ease to Foreigners, who are often perplexed by our irregular Phrases. The habit we

have got of speaking our own Language hinders us from perceiving what it is should cause their Perplexity. The greatest part even of the *French* wou'd sometimes have occasion to consult that Rule. They learnt their Tongue only by Use, and Use has it's Faults in all places. Each Province has some peculiar to it self; and *Paris* is not free from them. Even the Court has a touch of the Language of *Paris*, where Children of the highest quality are commonly educated. The most Polite find it hard to correct some certain forms of Speech they have accustomed themselves to in their Youth in *Gascony*, *Normandy*, and even at *Paris* by Conversation with Servants.

The *Greeks* and *Romans* were not contented with having learnt their native Tongue barely by practice; they studied it in their riper Years by reading the Grammarians, in order to observe the Rules, the Exceptions, the Etymologies, the Figurative Senses, the structure of the whole Language, and it's Variations.

A Learned Grammarian is in danger of making a Grammar too accurate and too full of Precepts. It wou'd be better, in my Opinion, to keep to a short and easie method. At first lay down on-

ly the most general Rules; the exceptions will follow by Degrees. The main point is to set a Person as soon as possible to make application of the Rules; and afterwards that Person will take pleasure in remarking the particulars of those Rules which at first he followed without heeding them.

This Grammar cou'd not indeed fix a living Language; but it wou'd perhaps diminish the capricious Alterations, the meer effects of Fashion which reigns over our Words as it does over our Cloaths. Such fanciful Alterations may indeed confound and destroy a Language, but can never make it compleat.

III.

Shall I presume to set down here, out of an excess of Zeal, a Proposition, which I submit to so enlightened a Society? Our Language wants a great number of Words and Phrases. Nay I am of Opinion that we have cramp'd and impoverished it within this Hundred Years by endeavouring to purify it. It is true it was then a little rude and too *verbose*. But we can't help regretting the loss of the Old Language, when we read it in *Marot*,

Amias, Cardinal *d' Ossat*, in the most jocular and in the most serious Writings. It had I know not what of short, simple, bold, lively and passionate. If I am not mistaken, more words have been left off than introduced. On the contrary, I would lose none, and acquire new. I wou'd Authorize any Term that we want and that has an harmonious sound, provided it be not equivocal.

When we carefully examine the signification of Words we observe that there are hardly any which are entirely Synonymous with each other. We find a vast many that are not sufficiently able to denote an Object without the addition of a second Word. From hence comes the frequent use of Circumlocutions. It wou'd be necessary to abridge our Tongue, by inventing a proper and apt Term to express each Object, each Sentiment, each Action. I cou'd even wish there were divers Synonymous Words to one single Object. This wou'd be a means to avoid all Equivocation, to vary our Phrases, and to facilitate Harmony, by chusing out from among several Synonymous Terms, that which wou'd run smoothest with the rest of the Period.

The

The *Greeks* had a great many Compound Words as *Pantocrator*, *Glauconis*, *Eucnemides*, &c. The *Latins*, tho' less bold, did somewhat imitate the *Greeks*; witness, *Lanifera*, *Malesuada*, *Pomifer*, &c. This Composition was serviceable for conciseness, and for the magnificence of the Verse. Besides, they made no scruple to bring several Dialects into the same Poem, to make the versification more various and easie.

The *Latins* enriched their Tongue with such Foreign Terms as they wanted. For instance, they had no words fit for Philosophy, which so late entered *Rome*. When they learnt *Greek* they borrowed its Terms to discourse upon the Sciences. *Cicero*, tho' extremely Scrupulous in the purity of his Language, freely makes use of such *Greek* Words as he has occasion for. At first the *Greek* Word was looked upon as foreign; they beg'd leave to use it; afterwards that permission turned to Possession and become a Right.

I am told that the *English* do not refuse any Words that fit their purpose. They take them any where indifferently, from among their Neighbours. Such Usurpations are lawful. In this matter every thing becomes common barely by use.

use. Words are but Sounds which we arbitrarily make the Signs of our Thoughts. Those sounds have in themselves no real value. They belong as rightfully to those who borrow as to those who lend them. What matters it whether a Word owe its birth to our own Country or comes to us from abroad? It were a boyish jealousy to be uneasy for such a trifle as the motion of the Lips and the concussion of the Air.

Besides, we of our Nation have very poor grounds for this false point of Honour. Our Language is only a mixture of *Greek*, *Latin*, *Teutonic*, and some confused remains of the *Gaulish*. Since we live wholly upon these Loans, which are now become our proper Fund, why shou'd we be foolishly ashamed of the liberty of borrowing, whereby we may go on to make our selves compleatly Rich? Let us sieze and carry off whatever we want to render our Language more clear, more exact, more concise, and more harmonious; All Circumlocution weakens a Discourse.

It is true, that Persons of an approved Taste and Discernment ought to chuse the Terms which it wou'd be necessary to authorize. *Latin* Words seem the most proper to be chosen. Their sound

is

is harmonious. They bear a relation with other words which have already taken root in our Ground. Our Ear is already accustomed to them. They need make but a step to enter in among us. We shou'd give them an agreeable termination. When we leave to Chance, or to the Ignorant Vulgar, or to the fancy of Women, the introduction of Terms; they bring in several which have neither the Perspicuity nor the Softness that were to be desired.

I confess that if without care or deliberation we threw into our Language a great number of foreign Words, we shou'd make the *French* a confused inelegant heap of other Languages that differ totally from it in genius. Thus Nourishment not sufficiently digested, produces in the Blood heterogeneous Parts, which adulterate instead of purifying it. But we are to remember that we have but just shook off a Barbarism that has been as ancient as our Nation.

Sed in longum tamen avum

*Manferunt, hodieq; manent vestigia ruris,
Serus enim Gracis admovit acumina chartis, &c.*

Horat. Epist. lib. ii. Epist. 1.

vers. 209. & seq.

Yet

Yet they continued long, and still we find
 Some little marks of the old Rustick Mind,
 Some of the Scurrilous humour left behind.

Creech. Transl.

It may perhaps be objected that the Academy has not power to publish an Edict in favour of a new Term; the Publick may be rebellious. I have not forgot the Example of *Tiberius*, that formidable Master of the lives of the *Romans*. He made himself ridiculous by affecting to be the introducer of the Word *Monopolium*. But I believe the Publick wou'd not want Complaisance for the Academy in any thing reasonable. Why may not we effect what the *English* practice every Day? We are deficient of a Term, and are sensible of our want. Chuse a musical sound, remote from all equivocation, that may run easily into our Tongue, and be convenient for the Abridgement of our Discourse: Every one immediately perceives the Benefit of it. Four or five Persons venture it modestly in familiar Conversation; others repeat it thro' a love of Novelty; and now it is in fashion. Thus a Path which a Man opens thro' a Field soon grows to be the Beaten Way when

When the old one is rugged and round about.

Besides simple and new Words, we have need of Compounds and Phrases, in which the art of joyning together Terms which have been used to stand asunder, may produce a graceful Novelty.

*Dixeris egregie, notum si callida verbum
Reddidere junctura novum.*

Horat. Art. Poet. v. 47. & seq.

You gain your Point, if your industrious Art
Can make unusual Words easy and plain.

Rosc. Translat.

Thus we say *velivolum* in One Word compounded of Two, and in Two Words *remigium Alarum*: *Lubricus aspicit*. But in this Point we should be cautious and deliberate, *tenuis cautusque serendis*. The Nations that live in a temperate Climate have not such a relish for bold and daring Metaphors as the People of Hot Countries.

Our Language would quickly become copious if those who have the greatest Reputation of Politeness wou'd apply themselves to introduce such Expressions, either simple or figurative, as we have hitherto wanted.

An excellent Rhetoric wou'd be far superior to a Grammar, or any other Work whose sole end is the Perfection of a Language. The Person that undertakes such a Treatise shou'd collect in it all the finest Précepts of *Aristotle*, *Cicero*, *Quintilian*, *Lucian*, *Longinus*, and the other celebrated Authors. Their Texts which he quoted, wou'd be the Ornaments of his own. By chusing only the Flower of the purest Antiquity, he would make it a short, exquisite and delicious Performance.

I am very far from preferring in general the Genius of the Ancient Orators to that of the Modern. I am fully persuaded of the Truth of a Comparison that has been made: Namely, That as our Trees have the same Form, and bear the same Fruits as they did Two thousand Year ago; so Men produce the same Thoughts. But there are Two Things that I take the Liberty to represent. The first is, That some Climates are more proper than others, for certain Talents, as well as for certain Fruits. For instance *Langue-doc* and *Provence* produce Raisins and Figs of a higher taste than *Normandy*, or than
the

the *Netherlands*. So again, The *Arcadians* were of a Genius more proper for the Liberal Arts than the *Scythians*. The *Sicilians* are better turned for Musick than the People of *Lapland*. The *Athenians* had quicker Wits than the *Bæotians*. The second thing that I observe is, that the *Greeks* had a sort of long Tradition which we want. They had a greater Field for Eloquence than our Nation can have. Among the *Greeks* every Thing depended upon the People, and the People depended upon Elocution. In their form of Government, Fortune, Reputation, Authority, attended the persuasion of the multitude. The People were carried away by artful and vehement Rhetoricians. Oratory was the great Spring both in Peace and in War. Hence proceed the many Speeches that are set down in History, and which to us are almost incredible, so foreign are they to our Manners. In *Diodorus Siculus* we find *Nicolaus* and *Gylippus* by turns governing the Minds of the *Syracusans*. First one prevails upon them to shew Mercy to the *Athenian* Prisoners, and the other the next moment, determines them to put those very Prisoners to Death.

Oratory has no such power among Us. Assemblies are now only for Ceremonies and Publick Spectacles. We have scarce any Monuments of a nervous Eloquence remaining either of our Ancient Parliaments, or our General States, or our Assemblies of the *Notables*. Every thing is decided in secret in the Cabinets of Princes, or in some particular Negotiation. Thus we are not encouraged to endeavour as the *Greeks* did to rise by our Eloquence. The Publick use of Oratory is at present almost wholly confined to the Pulpit and the Bar.

Our Lawyers have not, we may be sure, the same Warmth to gain a Cause relating to the Estate of a private Person, as the *Greek* Orators had Ambition to possess themselves of the Supreme Authority in a Republic. An Advocate loses nothing, nay, is paid for losing the Cause he pleads. Is he Young? He hurries to the Bar in hopes, with some little Elegance, to get a small Portion of Reputation, without ever having studied either the Grounds of the Laws, or the great Models of Antiquity. Has he established his Reputation? He quits the Bar and keeps only to Chamber Practice, by which he enriches himself. The most valuable Ad-

vocates

vocates now are those who set the Facts in a clear Light, who constantly recur to a Principle of Law, and who refute all Objections upon that Principle. But where are those who possess the great Art of forcing the Assent and moving the Hearts of a whole People?

May I venture to speak of our Preachers with the same Freedom? No Man more reveres the Ministers of the Word of God than my self. But I do not personally offend any among them, when I observe in general that all are not equally humble and disinterested. Young Men without Reputation are impatient to Preach. The Publick imagine that they seek less God's Glory than their own, and that they are more taken up with the advancing their Fortunes than with the Salvation of Souls. They speak more like shining Orators than *Ministers of Christ, and Dispensers of his Mysteries*. It was not with such Ostentation of Words that St. Peter preached the Crucified Jesus, in those Sermons that converted so many Thousand Souls.

Shall we learn of * St. *Austin* the Rules of a serious and effectual Eloquence? He with *Cicero* distinguishes three different

Kinds of it. To instruct, says he, we shou'd speak in a submissive and familiar Stile, *Submissè*. To inspire a Love for Truth, we shou'd speak in a sweet, a gracious and insinuating manner, *Temperatè*: And boldly and emphatically when we wou'd force away Men's Hearts, and tear them from their Passions, *Granditer*. He adds that we ought to make use of such Expressions as may please, only because there are few Men that have so much strength of Reason as to relish a Truth that is deliver'd in a dry naked Discourse. As for the sublime and emphatical Kind, he thinks it should not be florid, *Non tam Verborum ornatibus comtum est, quam violentum animi affectibus. --- Fertur quippe impetu suo, & elocutionis pulchritudinem, si occurrerit, vi rerum rapit, non cura decoris assumit.* A Man, says the same Father again, that fights valiantly with a Sword enriched with Gold and Jewels, uses those Arms because they are proper for Battle, not upon account of their Price. He adds, That God had suffered St. Cyprian to use affected Ornaments in his Letter to Donatus, To the intent that Posterity might see how much the Purity of the Christian Doctrine had afterwards corrected that Excess in him, and brought him to a more grave and modest Eloquence. But nothing

nothing can be more touching than the two Stories St. *Austin* tells us, to teach us the way how to preach with Profit.

Upon the first Occasion, he was as yet, but a Priest. The Holy Bishop *Valerius* employed him to preach in order to reform the People of *Hippo* * from too luxurious Feasting upon solemn Days. He took up the Scriptures. He there read the most vehement Reproachings. He conjured his Hearers 'By the Ignominies, 'by the Sufferings of Jesus Christ, by his 'Cross, by his Blood, *not to destroy them-* 'selves, to have Pity upon him who spoke 'to them with so much Affection; and to 'remember that venerable old Man *Vale-* 'rius, who out of tenderness to them, 'had charged him to instruct them in 'the Truth. 'Twas not, *says he*, by weep- 'ing over them that I made them weep; 'but while I was speaking, their Tears 'prevented mine. I confess that then I 'could not refrain. After we had wept 'together, I began to have strong Hopes 'of their Amendment. He then quite varied from the Discourse that he had prepared, not thinking it now so proper to the disposition of their Minds; and from

* Ep. xxix. ad Alyp. *De Doctr. Christ. lib. 1. c. 10.*

that very Day he had the Consolation to see that People reform'd into Temperance.

Here follows the other Occasion when the same Father bore away the Hearts of his Audience. Let us hear his own Words. * ' A Man must by no means ' imagine that he has spoken in a noble ' and sublime manner, when he has received loud Acclamations and great Applauses. The meanest turns of Wit, ' and the Ornaments of the *temperate* ' kind can gain such Commendation. But ' the *Sublime* does often oppress with its ' weight, and even take away the use of ' Speech. It reduces to Tears. When I ' endeavoured to persuade the People of ' *Cesarea* in *Mauritania* to abolish a Combat of Citizens, wherein Relations, ' Brothers, Fathers and Sons divided in ' two Parties, fought in publick for several Days running in a certain season of ' the Year, and each Man endeavoured to ' kill his Opponent; I exerted my utmost ' Power in the noblest Expressions to ' root out of the Hearts and Manners of ' that People, so cruel and so inveterate a ' Custom. But yet I thought I had done

* De Doctr. Christ. lib. iv.

' nothing

' nothing while I only heard their Accla-
 ' mations. But I was in hopes when I
 ' saw them Weep. Their Acclamations
 ' shewed that I had instructed them, and
 ' that they were pleased with my Di-
 ' scourse. But their Tears shewed that
 ' they were changed. When I saw them
 ' trickle down their Cheeks, I then be-
 ' lieved that this horrible Custom which
 ' they had received from their Ancestors,
 ' and which had so long tyrannized over
 ' them, wou'd be abolished. It is now
 ' about eight Years since, or more ; and
 ' by the Grace of Christ they have not
 ' yet attempted any thing like it.

If St. *Austin* had enervated his Discourse
 by the affected Ornaments of the *florid*
 kind, he had never been able to correct
 the People of *Hippo* and *Cesarea*.

Demosthenes followed this Rule of true
 Eloquence. * ' O *Athenians*, said he, Do
 ' not imagine that *Philip* is like a Deity,
 ' and that he is Master of Fortune. Even
 ' among the Men that appear devoted to
 ' his Interests, there are those that Hate,
 ' that Fear, that Envy him.--- But all
 ' Things lie as if they were buried by
 ' Means of your Inactivity and Negligence.

* i Philip.

' ---Behold,

' —Behold, O *Athenians*, to what Condi-
 ' on you are reduced. That wicked Man
 ' is come to such a Point as to leave you
 ' no further Choice between Vigilance
 ' and Inaction. He threatens you; He
 ' speaks (we are told) with Arrogance; He
 ' cannot now be satisfied with what he
 ' has conquered from you; He every Day
 ' forms new Projects to bring your Necks
 ' to his Yoke; He lays Snares for you
 ' on all sides, while you continue back-
 ' ward and motionless. When O *Atheni-*
 ' *ans*, will you do what is necessary to be
 ' done? When shall we see you begin to
 ' move? When will necessity rouse you
 ' up? But what are we to think of what
 ' is actually doing? My Opinion is that
 ' no necessity is more urging to a free Man
 ' than that which results from the Shame
 ' of having ill managed his own Affairs.
 ' Will you still go on to lose your time?
 ' Will every one continue asking in the
 ' publick Place, Is there no News?
 ' What can be more new than to see a
 ' Man of *Macedon* lord it over the *Athe-*
 ' *nians* and govern all *Greece*? *Philip* is
 ' dead says one. No says another, he is
 ' but Sick. What matters it which he is
 ' since if he were dead you would soon
 ' raise your selves another *Philip*? This is
 ' good

good sense without any other Ornament besides its native force. It makes the truth apparent to all the People. It awakens them, it stirs them up, it shews them the Abyss open before them. All is spoke for the common good: Not a Word for the vanity of the Orator. Each period instructs and moves. Nothing Shines.

It is true, the *Romans* began very late to follow the Example of the *Greeks*, in cultivating Literature.

*Gravis ingenium, Gravis dedit ore rotundo
Musa loqui, prater laudem nullius avaris.
Romani pueri longis rationibus affem, &c.*

Horat. Art. Poet. vers. 323, & seq.

*Greece had a Genius, Greece had Eloquence,
Far her ^{of} Ambition and her End was Fame.
Our Roman Youth are bred another way,
And taught no Arts but those of Usury.*

Rosc. Transf.

The *Romans* were employed in Legislation, in War, in Agriculture, and in Commerce. This was what made *Virgil* say,

Excudent alii spirantia mollius æra, &c.
Tu regere imperio, &c.

Aeneid. VI. v. 848.

Salust gives us a fine Picture of the Manner of ancient *Rome*, confessing that she neglected Learning.

* *Prudentissimus quisq; negotiosus maximæ erat. Ingenium nemo sine corpore exercebat. Optivus quisque facere, quam dicere, sua lab aliis benefacta laudari quam ipse aliorum narrare malebat.*

It must, nevertheless, be confessed, according to the testimony of *Livy*, that the nervous and popular Eloquence was very well cultivated at *Rome*, even in the time of *Manlius*. That Man, who had defended the *Capitol* against the *Gauls*, tried to stir up the People against the Government.

† *Quousque tandem*, says he, *ignorabitis vires vestras, quas natura ne belluas quidem ignorare voluit? Numerate saltem quot ipsi sitis.——Tamen acrius crederem, vos pro libertate, quam illas pro dominatione certaturos.——Quousq; me circumspectabitis? Ego quidem nulli vestrum deero, &c.*

* *Bell. Catilin.*

† *Liv. lib. VI. cap. 18.*

This powerful Orator moved all the People to grant him impunity when he stretched his Hands towards the Capitol which he had formerly saved : Nor cou'd his Death be obtained of the Multitude till he was carried into a Place from whence he cou'd no longer shew the Capitol to the Citizens.

* *Apparuit Tribunis, says Livy, nisi oculos quoque hominum liberassent à tanti memoria decoris, numquam fore in praecipitis beneficio animis, vero crimini locum*——— *Ibi crimen valuit, &c.* Every one knows what Troubles were caused by the Eloquence of the Greeks. That of *Carline* put the Republick into the greatest Danger. But that Eloquence tended only to persuade and to move the Passions. Strokes of Wit had nothing to do in it. A florid Declamer wou'd have had no effect in affairs.

Nothing can be more simple than *Brutus* when he raises himself so far above *Cicero*. † as even to reprehend and confound him. *You beg life, says he, of Octavius. What Death cou'd be so bad? You*

* Liv. lib. vi. cap. 20.

† Apud *Cicronem* lib. Epist. ad *Brutum* Epist. 15.

shew by this request that Tyranny is not destroy-
 ed, and that we have only changed our Ty-
 rant. Review your own Words. Deny, if
 you dare, that such a Petition is owing only to
 a King, and from a man reduced to Servitude.
 You say you ask of him only one Favour,
 namely that he wou'd save the Lives of Citi-
 zens who have the esteem of good Men and of
 the whole Roman People. What then Unless
 he graciously pleases, shall we be no more?
 But it is better to be no more, then to be by
 him. No, I do not believe that any of the Gods
 are so far provoked against the safety of Rome
 as to will that the life of any Citizen shou'd be
 beg'd of Octavius, much more the Lives of
 the Deliverers of the Universe.--O Cicero can
 you own that Octavius has such a Power,
 and yet be his Friend! But if you love me,
 can you desire to see me at Rome, when I must
 be recommended to that Boy to obtain leave
 to come thither. What is he whom you
 thank for suffering me to live? Are we to
 think our selves happy in asking this Favour
 of Octavius rather than of Anthony?-- This
 Weakness and this Despair is what others as
 well as you must upbraid themselves for, who have
 breathed into Cæsar the ambition of making
 himself King.---If we remembered that we are
 Romans---they wou'd not be more audacious to
 seize the Tyranny, than we courageous to
 repulse

repulse them. Q. *Revenger of so many Crimes,*
I fear you have only delayed our Fall. How
can you behold what you have done, &c.

How much wou'd this Discourse be
 weakened and debased if it were filled
 with Points and Quirks of Wit? And
 will Men whose Business it is to speak as
 Apostles gather with so much Affectati-
 on the Flowers which *Demosthenes*, *Man-*
lius and *Brutus* trod under foot? Shall we
 believe that the Ministers of the Gospel
 are less seriously concern'd for the eternal
 Salvation of Mankind, than *Demosthenes* was
 zealous for the Liberty of his Country, than
Manlius was ambitious to seduce the Mul-
 titude, or than *Brutus* was courageous to
 chuse Death rather than a Life which he
 shou'd owe to a Tyrant?

I confess that the florid sort has its
 Beauties; but they are misplaced in Di-
 scourses where not a delicate turn of Wit
 but strong Passions are to speak. The florid
 sort never attains to the Sublime. How
 wou'd the Ancients have laugh'd at a Tra-
 gedy wherein *Alcebe* shou'd have bewailed
 her Misfortunes in Points? True Grief
 does not speak in that manner. What
 should we think of a Preacher that should
 set forth to Sinners the Judgments of God

D

hanging

hanging over their Heads, and Hell gaping beneath their Feet in an affected jingle of Words ?

There is a Decency to be observed in Words as in Cloaths. A disconsolate Widow does not wear her Mourning adorned with Embroidery and Ribbons. An Apostolical Missionary shou'd not change the Word of God into a vain Word full of affected Ornaments. The *Pagans* wou'd have been filled with Indignation to see even a Comedy so ill managed.

*Ut ridentibus arident, ita flentibus adsunt
Humani vultus : sive me flere, dolendum est
Primum ipsi tibi. Tunc tua me infortunia ludent
Telephe, vel Peleu, male si mandata loqueris
Aut dormitabo, aut ridebo ; tristia mecum
Vultum verbo decent.*

Horat. Art. Poët. 101, & seq.

*We weep and laugh as we see others do,
He only makes me sad who shows the way,
And first is sad himself : Then, Telephus,
I feel the weight of your Calamities,
And fancy all your Miseries my own :
But if you act them ill, I sleep or laugh ;
Your Looks must alter as your Subject does.*

Roscom. Transl.

We

We are not to be so unjust to Eloquence as to imagine that it is only a frivolous Art which the Declaimer makes use of to impose upon the weak Heads of the Multitude, and to make a traffic of his Oratory. It is a very serious thing, designed for Instruction, to repress the Passions, to correct the Manners, to support the Laws, to direct public Deliberations, to render Men good and happy. The more a Declaimer endeavours to dazzle me by the Artifices of his Discourse, the more I despise his Vanity. His eagerness to gain my Admiration of his Wit, with me, makes him unworthy of all Admiration. I love a Man that is serious, that speaks to me for my sake, and not for his own, that seeks my Salvation, and not his own vain Glory. The Man that deserves attention is he who uses Words only as a cloathing to the Thought, and the Thought only for the sake of Truth and Virtue. Nothing is more contemptible than an Orator by Trade, who sets out his Words as a Quack does his Medicines.

I call even the Pagans to be Judges of this Question. *Plato* wou'd suffer in his Republic no Music that had the effeminate Sounds of the *Lydians*. The *Lacedemonians*

demonians excluded from theirs, all Instruments too compounded, which might enervate the Heart. Harmony that aims only at pleasing the Ear, is nothing but an amusement for idle effeminate People, and is unworthy of a well regulated Commonwealth. It is good no further than as the Notes agree with the Sense of the Words, and as the Words inspire vertuous Thoughts. Painting, Sculpture, and the other polite Arts ought to have the same end. Eloquence shou'd certainly make that its Object. Pleasure shou'd be mixed with it, only as a counterpoise to the vicious Passions, and to render Virtue amiable.

I wou'd have an Orator prepare himself a long while in general, in order to acquire a Fund of Knowledge, and make himself capable of good Compositions; I wou'd have this general Preparation save him the trouble afterwards of being obliged to prepare himself much for any particular Discourse. He shou'd naturally be a Master of very good Sense, and to good Sense he shou'd refer every thing; his Studies shou'd be solid, he shou'd exercise himself in reasoning justly and exactly, without ever having recourse to the least Subtlety. I wou'd have him distrustful of his
Imagi-

Imagination, that it may never hurry him away, and ground each Discourse upon an indisputable Principle, and from thence draw the natural Consequences.

*Scribendi recte sapere est principium & fons.
Rem tibi Socratica poterunt ostendere chartæ,
Verbaq; provisam rem non invita sequentur.
Qui didicit patriæ quid debeat, & quid amicis;*

Horat. Art. Poet. v. 309, & seq.

Usually a florid Declaimer is ignorant of the Principles, both of a sound Philosophy, and of the Doctrine of the Gospel for the improvement of Manners.

He looks out for nothing but shining Phrases and ingenious turns of Expression. What he most wants is a Fund of Things. He can speak with Eloquence, without knowing what he would say. He debilitates the greatest Truths by a vain and too curious turn of Words.

On the contrary, the true Orator gives his Discourse no other Ornaments than perspicuous Truths, than noble Sentiments, than strong Expressions adapted to what he endeavours to inculcate. He thinks, he feels, and Words follow. * He

Horat. De Arte. Lib. IV.

depends not upon Words, says St. Austin, but Words depend upon him. A Man that has a great Soul, with some natural bent to Elocution, and practices much, need never fear a want of Expression. His meanest Discourses will have original Strokes which a flourishing Declaimer can never imitate. He is not a Slave to Words. He goes directly to the Truth. He knows Passion to be the Soul of Eloquence. He immediately lays down the first Principle of the Subject which he intends to clear. He sets that Principle in its most natural view. He turns it all manner of ways to make it plain to the weakest of his Hearers. He descends to the remotest Consequences, by a concise and easy Deduction. Each Truth is placed in its true Order with respect to the whole. It prepares, brings on, and supports another Truth that hath need of its assistance. This disposition serves for the avoiding of unnecessary tedious Repetitions. But he is not afraid of making such Repetitions as are absolutely essential to bring back the Hearer to that point of his Discourse which alone is decisive of the whole. He must often shew the Conclusion in the Principle. From that Principle, as from the Centre, Evidence is dispersed round

round to all the parts of the Work; just as a Painter places his Light in a Picture, so as from one single point to distribute to each Object its true proportion of it. The whole Discourse is one. It may be reduc'd to a single Proposition set in its fullest light by variety of Turns. This unity of Design shews us at one view the entire Performance, as we may see from the public Place of a City all the Streets and all the Gates, when those Streets are even, equal, and built according to Symmetry. The Discourse is the Proposition enlarged. The Proposition is the Discourse in miniature.

Deniq; sit quodvis simplex duntaxat & unum.

Horat. Art. Poet. v. 23.

Whoever does not perceive the beauty and strength of this Unity and Order, has not yet seen any thing in its full Light. He has beheld only Shadows in Plato's Cavern. What shou'd we say of an Architect that shou'd find no difference between a great Palace built according to all the Rules of Proportion so as to form a Whole with a Unity of Design, and a confused heap of little Buildings which would not compose a true Whole, tho' they

they stood all together? What Comparison can be made between the *Coliseum*, and a confused multitude of irregular Houses in a Town? A Work never has a true Unity but when not the least part can be taken away without cutting to the Quick.

It never has a true Order but when no part can be displaced without weakening, without darkning, without unsettling the whole. This *Horace* explains perfectly well.

neq̄ lucidus ordo:

*Ordinis hæc virtus erit, & venias, aut ego fallor,
Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici
Pleraq̄, differat, & præsens in tempus omittat.*

Art. Poet. v. 41. & seq.

An Author that does not give this Order to his Discourse, is not compleatly Master of his Subject. He has but an imperfect Taste, and a half Genius. Order is what is most rarely to be met with in the Operations of the Mind. When Order, Justness, Strength, and Passion are found together, the Discourse is perfect. But an Orator must have penetrated to the very bottom, and have the whole extent of his Subject in his Eye, to know the exact place of each Word. This is what

what a Declaimer given up to his Imagination, and empty of solid Learning, can never attain.

Isocrates is sweet, insinuating, full of Elegance; but is he to be compared to *Homer*? Go we further: I am not afraid to say that *Demosthenes* seems to me superior to *Cicero*. I protest, No-body admires *Cicero* more than I do. He embellishes every thing that he touches. He is an Honour to Expression. He manages Words as another cou'd never do. He has I know not how many sorts of Wit. He is even concise and emphatical as often as he pleases to be so, as against *Catiline*, against *Verres*, against *Anthoni*; but we may perceive some *feigning* in his Discourse. His Art is wonderful, but it is not enough concealed. The Orator, even while he is speaking for the safety of the Republic, forgets not that he is an Orator, nor suffers us to forget it. *Demosthenes* seems to be transported out of himself, and to see nothing but his Country. He does not search for Beauties, they come unexpected. He is above admiration. He uses Expression as a modest Man does his Habit, to cover himself. He Thunders, he Lightens. He is a Torrent that sweeps every thing that lies in its way. We cannot entirely

criticize him, because we are entirely possessed by him. Our Attention is upon the Things he utters, and not upon his Words. We lose sight of him. We are wholly taken up with *Philip* who invades all things. I am charmed with those two Orators; but I own I am less moved with the infinite Art and the magnificent Eloquence of *Cicero*, than with the rapid Simplicity of *Demosthenes*.

Art discredits it self; It does it self an injury by appearing. *Isocrates*, says *Longinus*, fell into Puerility, when he began in this manner. Since Eloquence has naturally the faculty of making great Things, little, and little, great; since it can give the Charms of Novelty to the oldest Things, and make the Newest appear old. Is it thus (A Man might say) O *Isocrates*, that you think to change the whole Face of Affairs among the Spartans and Athenians: By thus composing an Elogium upon Eloquence, he, properly speaking, makes an Exordium to advise his Hearers not to believe a Word he speaks. Indeed, it is declaring to the World, that Orators are no better than Sophists, such as the *Gorgias* of *Plato*, and the other Rhetoricians of Greece, who abused Eloquence to the imposing upon the People.

IF

If Eloquence requires that the Orator be a good Man, and so esteemed, for the Success even of profane Affairs; how much more then, ought we to believe these Words of St. *Austin* concerning the Men that are to speak as Apostles? *He speaks with sublimity, whose Life is irreproachable.* What effect is to be hoped from the Discourse of a young Man, without depth of Learning, without Experience, without acquired Reputation, who plays with the Word, and whose aim is to make his Fortune by that Ministry wherein he ought to be poor with CHRIST, to bear his Cross with him, by renouncing himself, and overcoming the Passions of Men to convert them.

I cannot bring my self to quit this Article without a Word upon the Eloquence of the Fathers. Many learned Men do not afford them strict Justice. They judge of them from some one hard Metaphor of *Tertullian*, some tumid Period of St. *Cyprian*, some subtle and rhiming Antithesis of St. *Austin*, some jingle upon Words of *Peter Chrysologus*. But we ought to consider the depraved nature of the Times in which the Fathers lived. *Rome* began to lose its fine taste soon after the Age of *Augustus*. *Juvenal* is less delicate than *Horace*;

race; Seneca the Tragic Poet, and Lucan,
 have a shocking Turgidity. *Rome* fell
 The Studies of *Athens* itself were corrupt-
 ed when *St. Basil* and *St. Gregory Nazian-*
zen went thither. The Refinements of
 Wit had got footing. The Fathers, taught
 by the bad Rhetoricians of their time, were
 carried away with the universal prejudice.
 The wisest Men can very seldom resist
 such a Torrent. It was not thought suffer-
 able to speak in a natural and simple man-
 ner. The World in matter of Eloquence,
 was in the condition that it wou'd be in as
 to Dress, if no body durst appear in a fine
 Cloth, without loading it with the thickest
 Embroidery. According to this Fashi-
 on, Orators were not to speak, but to
 declaim. But if we will have the Patience
 to examine the Writings of the Fathers,
 we shall find in them things of very great
 Value. *St. Cyprian* has a magnanimity and
 a vehemence which is somewhat like that
 of *Demosthenes*. We may observe in *St.*
Chrysostom an exquisite Judgment, noble
 Images, a prudent and amiable Morality.
St. Austin is at once sublime and plain;
 He ascends to the highest Principles by
 the most familiar turns. He asks Questions;
 he puts Questions to himself; he makes
 answers. It is a conversation between
 him

him and his Hearers. Comparisons are properly brought in to clear up all their Doubts. He sometimes descends to the very utmost Grossness of the People, to reform them. *St. Bernard* was a Prodigy in a barbarous Age. He has Delicacy, Elevation, fine Turns, Tenderneſs and Vehemence. We are amazed at all that is great and beautiful in the Fathers when we know the Age wherein they wrote. We forgive *Montaigne* his *Gaſcon* Expreſſions, and *Marot* his old Language; why cannot we ſuffer in the Fathers the Turgidity of their Age, ſince they point out to us the moſt precious Truths expreſſed with the ſtrongest Touches?

But I am not here to compoſe the Work which is reſerved for ſome learned Hand. It is enough to hint in general what is to be expected from the Author of an excellent Rhetoric. He may embellish his Work by imitating *Cicero* in the mixture of Examples. *Men of a penetrating and rapid Genius*, ſays *St. Auſtin*, improve faſter in Eloquentice by reading the Diſcourſes of eloquent Men, than by ſtudying even the Precepts of the Art. An agreeable Deſcription might be made of the Orators, of their Manners, Taſts and Maxims. They even ought to be compared together, to enable

ble the Reader to judge of the Degree of excellence of each of them.

The PLAN of a Poetic.

V.

A Poetic seems to me, to be no less desirable than a Rhetoric. Poetry is more serious and more useful than the vulgar take it to be. Religion consecrated Poetry to its own Use from the very beginning of the World. Before Mankind had a Text of Divine Scripture, the Sacred Canticles, which they knew by Heart, preserved the Memory of the Origin of the World, and the Tradition of the wondrous Works of God. Nothing is equal to the Magnificence and Transport of the Song of *Moses*. The Book of *Job* is a Poem full of the boldest and most majestic Figures. *The Song of Songs* does gracefully and tenderly express the mysterious Union of God with the Soul of Man, which becomes his Spouse. The *Psalms* will be the Admiration and Comfort of all Ages and all Nations that know and feel the true God. The whole Scripture is full

of Poetry even in those Parts where not the least Footstep of Versification is to be found.

Besides, Poetry gave the World its first Laws. It was she that softened their Fierceness while they were yet Savage, that drew them from the Forests where they ranged in Solitude, that polished them, that regulated their manners, that formed Nations and Families, that gave them a relish for the sweets of Society, that recalled the use of Reason, cultivated Vertue, and invented the polite Arts. It was she that enflamed their Hearts to War, and moderated them to Peace.

*Silvestres homines facer interpretesq; Deorum
Cadibus & victu fœdo deterruit Orpheus:
Dictus ab hoc lenire Tygres, rabidosq; Leones.
Dictus & Amphion Thebana conditor arcis
Saxa movere sono testudinis, & prece blanda
Ducere quo vellet. Fuit hac sapientia quondam;
&c.*

*Sic honor & nomen, divinis vatibus atque
Carminibus venit. Post hos insignis Homerus
Tyrtæusq; mares animos in Martia bella
Versibus exacuit.*

Horat. Art. Poet. vers. 391. & seq.

E 2 Orpheus

Orpheus, inspired by more than Human Power,
 Did not (as Poets feign) tame Savage Beasts,
 But Men as lawless, and as wild as they,
 And first dissuaded them from Rage and Blood;
 Thus when Amphion built the Theban Wall,
 They feign'd the Stones obey'd his Magic Lute;
 &c.

So ancient is the Pedigree of Verse,
 And so divine a Poets Function.
 Then Homer's and Tyrtæus' Martial Muse
 Waken'd the World, and sounded loud Alarms.
 Rosc. Transl.

Words animated by lively Images, by noble Figures, by strong Passions, and by the Charms of Harmony, was called the Language of the Gods. The most barbarous People were not insensible to it. As much as we shou'd despise bad Poetasters, so much ought we to admire and cherish a great Poet, who does not make Poetry a diversion of the Wit to gain himself a vain applause, but who employs it to transport Men's Minds in favour of Wisdom, Vertue, and Religion.

May I presume to represent here the trouble it gives me when I think that the Perfecting of the French Versification is almost impossible? What confirms me in this

this Fear is, that our greatest Poets have wrote many weak Lines. No body made finer Verses than *Malherbe*: Yet how many are there in his Works that are far from being worthy of Him? Even those among our most valuable Poets that have had the least Inequality, have very many Verses that are rugged, obscure, and languid. They endeavoured to give their Thought a delicate turn, and made it utterly unintelligible. They are full of forced Epithets to bring in the Rhyme. We might cut away several Verses and not lose any Beauty. This very easily appears if we examine any of their Pieces with a rigorous exactness.

If I am not mistaken, our Versification is a loser more than a gainer by Rhyme. It loses abundance of variety, of facility, and of Harmony. Oftentimes the Rhyme, which the Poet is forced to fetch a great way off, obliges him to lengthen out and enervate his Period. He must put in two or three Verses totally unnecessary, to introduce one that he has occasion for. Our Poets are very scrupulous to use no Rhimes but what are Rich, but not at all so as to the solidity of the Thoughts and Sentiments, nor to natural Turns, or to nobleness of

sions. Rhyme gives us nothing but the uniformity of the Finals, which is tiresome and so far from being pleasing to the Ear that in Prose we avoid it. Tis true, there is somewhat more Harmony in *Odes* and *Stanzas*, where the Rhymes being interspersed have more Cadence and Variety. But great Heroick Verses, which require the sweetest, the most various and the most majestick Sounds, are often those that have least of that Perfection.

The irregular Verses have the same transposition of Rhymes as the *Odes*. Besides, their not being tied down to any fixed Rule, gives a scope of varying their Measure and their Cadence according as the Poet intends to rise or fall. *M. de la Fontaine* has made great use of this Liberty.

I am far, however, from being for the abolishing of Rhymes. Without them our Versification wou'd be perhaps lost. We have not in our Language that diversity of short and long Syllables which in the *Greek* and *Latin* compos'd the Feet and the Measure of Verses. But I think it wou'd not be improper to give our Poets more Freedom as to the Rhyme, that they might be the more exact in sense and harmony. By abating a little
of

of the Rhyme we shou'd make Reason more perfect. There wou'd be more room for the Great, the Beautiful, the Simple, the Easie. The greatest Poets wou'd not then be guilty of forced turns, stiff Epithets, and far fetcht Thoughts.

The Example of the *Greeks* and *Latins* may encourage us to take this Liberty. Their Versification was without Comparison less cramping than ours. Rhyme of it self is more difficult than all their Rules put together. And yet the *Greeks* had recourse to their several Dialects. Besides, both Languages had superfluous Syllables which they freely added to fill up their Verses. *Horace* allows himself very great Conveniences in the Versification of his *Satires*, his *Epistles* and even some of his *Odes*. Why then shou'd not We seek for the like Advantages, we whose Versification is so cramping and so capable of deadening the fire of a good Poet?

The severity of our Tongue against almost all inversions of Phrases infinitely increases the Difficulty of making *French Verses*. We have made the composing of a good Work, a perfect torment, and that without any Advantage: One wou'd almost believe that the Difficult has been aim'd at
more

more than the Beautiful. Among us a Poet must study as much for the placing of a Syllable, as for the noblest Sentiments, the most natural Painting, or the boldest Touches. On the contrary, the Ancients by their frequent Inversions facilitated beautiful and various Cadencies, and passionate Expressions. Inversions were turned into noble Figures, and kept the Mind suspended in the Expectation of the Wonderful. This appears from the following beginning of *Virgil's* viiith Eclogue,

*Pastorum musam Damonis & Alphesibœi
Immemor barbarum, quos est mirata juventa
Certantes; quorum stupefactæ cœcimine Lynceæ,
Et mutata suos requierunt flumina cursus,
Damonis musam dicemus, & Alphesibœi.*

Take away this Inversion, and put those Words into a Grammatical Order, and you take away all their Passion, their Majesty, their Grace, and their Harmony. It is this Suspension that seizes the Reader. How timid and scrupulous is our Language compared to that? Durst we imitate this Verse, where every Word is displaced?

Aret ager, vitio moriens sitit aëris herba.

When *Horace* would prepare his Reader for some great Object, he leads him with

without shewing him whither he is carrying him, or giving him time to breathe :

Qualem ministrum fulminis alivom, &c.

Od. lib. 4. Od. 4. v. 1.

I confess we must not introduce into our Tongue a great number of these Inversions all at once. We are not yet accustomed to them; they wou'd seem hard and obscure. *Boileau's Pindaric Ode* is not free from that Imperfection. I observe it with the greater Freedom, because in other Respects I admire the Works of that great Poet. We shou'd step by step chuse the softest inversions, and such as border nearest upon those our Language already allows of. For instance, our whole Nation has approved of these.

*La se perdent ces noms de maître de la terre,
Et tombent avec eux d'une chute commune
Tous ceux que leur fortune
Faisoit leurs serviteurs.*

Malherbe. liv. 6, 18, 71.

Ronsard undertook too much at once. He committed a sort of forcible Rape upon our Tongue by bending it to Inversions that were obscure and too bold. It was

was a crude indigested Language. He added too many compounded Words, which were not yet brought into the use of the Nation. He talked *Greek* in *French* in spite of the *French* themselves. Indeed he was not much in the wrong in trying to open some new Way for the enriching our Tongue, for emboldening our Poetry, and for facilitating our Versification which was then in its Infancy. But in matter of Language, nothing can be effected without the general Consent of Men, for whom we write. We ought never to make two Steps at one time; and we shou'd stop short, the Moment we find that we are not followed by the Multitude. Singularity is dangerous in every Thing: but it is inexcusable in Things that depend upon Custom.

The shocking excess of *Ronsard* threw us a little into the opposite Extreme. Our Tongue was afterwards impoverished and cramped. It never dares proceed any otherwise than after the most scrupulous and most uniform Method of Grammar. The first that comes out is constantly a Nominative Substantive which leads in its Adjective as it were by the Hand. Its Verb never fails to follow it, attended by an Adverb that will admit of nothing between

tween them; and immediately the Rule brings in an Accusative that can never be put out of its place. This excludes all suspension of the Mind, all Expectation, all Surprise, all Variety, and oftentimes all Magnificency of Cadence.

I agree on the other hand that we ought never to venture an ambiguous Expression. Nay, I am of *Quintilian's* Opinion, that it is best to avoid a Phrase that the Reader does understand, but which he cou'd not understand if he did not supply what was wanting to it. Diction shou'd be simple, exact and easie: every thing should naturally unfold it self and go before the Reader. When an Author speaks in Public, there is no Pains but what he ought to take to save the Reader's. All the Labour shou'd be his, and all the Pleasure and Profit the Person's to whom he directs his Discourse. An Author should leave no part of his Thought to be studied for. None but the Enigmatists have a right to offer an obscure Meaning. *Augustus* was rather for using frequent Repetitions, than for suffering the least likelihood of Perplexity. And indeed the first Care of a Man that writes only to be understood, is to ease his Reader, by expressing himself clearly.

I own

I own our greatest *French* Poets, confin'd
 by the strict Laws of our Versification,
 are in some Places deficient of this Degree
 of Perspicuity. A Man that thinks much,
 wou'd say much; he cannot resolve to lose
 any thing; he knows the value of all that
 he has hit upon; he takes great Pains to
 include all in the narrow Bounds of a
 Verse. He even strives for too much De-
 licacy. This degenerates into Subtilty.
 He endeavours too much to dazzle and sur-
 prize. He will have more Wit than his Rea-
 ders, and is willing to make them perceive
 it, that he may gain their Admiration;
 whereas he ought never to have more
 than them; nay, he should insinuate it
 into them, without seeming to have any
 himself. He is not satisfied with meer
 Reason, with natural Graces, with lively
 Sentiments wherein consists the most real
 Perfection. His Self-Love makes him
 shoot beyond the Mark. He cannot keep
 in his right Senses while he is endeavour-
 ing at the Sublime. The Best, at which
 he aims, makes him lose the Good, says
 an *Italian* Proverb. He runs into the
 Fault of scattering too much Salt, and
 giving too high a *gout* to what he seasons.
 He does like those who load a Suit with
 too much Embroidery. An exquisite
 Taste

Taste avoids excess in every Thing, without excepting even Wit it self. Wit grows tiresome when it is affected and given too plentifully. To know how to prune it off, in order to adapt one self to that of the Multitude, and to make the way plain for them, is having enough and to spare. Those Poets that have the greatest Flights of Genius, the greatest plenty of Thoughts, and the most fruitful Imagination, are those that should most beware of this Rock of excess of Wit. It is, you'll say, a good, a beautiful Fault; and yet not very common: But still 'tis a Fault, and one of the hardest to correct. Horace would have an Author be rigorously strict upon himself even in this Point.

*Vir bonus & prudens versus reprehendat inertes,
Culpabit duros, inemptis allinet atrum
Transverso calamo signum: ambitiosa recidet
Ornamenta, parum claris licet dare coget.*

Art. Poet. v. 444. & seq.

We are great Gainers by losing all superfluous Ornaments to confine our selves to such Beauties as are simple, easy, clear, and in appearance negligent. In Poetry, as in Architecture, all the necessary Parts ought to be converted into natural

tural Ornaments. But every Ornament, that is nothing but an Ornament, is impertinent. Leave it out; there is nothing wanting; and Vanity is the only sufferer by it. An Author that has too much Wit, and that is obstinately resolved always to have too much, wearies and exhausts mine. I cannot bear so much; if he wou'd shew less, he wou'd give me room to breathe and please me better. He keeps me too much bent; the reading of his Verses becomes a Study. So many Flashes dazzle me: I chuse a gentle Light that may help my weak Eyes. I seek an amiable Poet, that adapts himself to the generality of Men, and that does every thing for them, and nothing for himself, I love so familiar, so sweet, and so simple a sublime, that every one shou'd at first be tempted to believe that he cou'd have thought it himself, tho' very few Men are capable of it. I prefer the Amiable to the Wonderful and to the Surprising. I am for a Man that makes me forget that he is an Author, and that enters into Conversation with me as it were Face to Face. I wou'd have him set before my Eyes a Husbandman that is fearful for his Harvests; a Shepherd that knows nothing but his Village and his Flock; a Nurse

Nurse anxious for her Infant. I wou'd have him turn my Thoughts not upon Himself and his Wit, but upon the Shepherds that he introduces.

*Despectus tibi sum, nec qui sim quaris Alexi,
Quam dives pecoris, nivei quam lactis abundans:
Mille mea Siculis errant in montibus agne;
Lao mihi non est atque novum non frigore defit;
Canto qua solitus, si quando armenta vocabat,
Amphion Dirceus in Alteo Aracyntho;
Nec sum adeo informis, nuper me in littore vidi
Cum placidum ventis staret mare.*

Virg. Eclog. II. v. 18.

How much more beautiful is this Country Simplicity; than a subtle refined turn of Wit?

*Ex noto fictum carmen sequar, ut sibi quis
Speret idem, sudet multum, frustra que laboret
Ausus idem. Tantum series, juncturaque pollet,
Tantum de medio sumptis accedit honoris.*

Hor. Art. Poet. vers. 240. & seq.

What greatness is it in a Poet's stooping thus to adapt himself to whatever he draws, and to hit each several Character! How superior is he to what is called Wit when he is not afraid of hiding a part of what he has! A Work

cannot be perfectly charming unless the Author does himself forget, and suffers me to forget that he is an Author. He must leave me in full Liberty to myself. For instance, *Virgil* must disappear and I must imagine I really behold his delightful Place.

Muscosi fontes & semno mollior herba, &c.
Idem. *Ecl. VII. vers. 45.*

I must wish to be carried into this other.
*O mihi tum quam molliter ossa quiescant,
Vestra meos olim si fistula dicat amores.
Atque utinam ex vobis unus, vestrique fuisssem,
Aut custos gregis, aut matura vinitor uva.*

Idem *Eclog. X. vers. 33.*
I must envy the Happiness of those who dwell in this other pleasant spot painted by *Horace*.

*Qua pinus ingens, albague populus
Umbram hospitalem consociare amant
Ramis, & obliquo laborat
Lympha fugax trepidare rivo.*

Lib. II. *Od. 3. vers. 9.*
I am infinitely more pleased with this Shade, with this Brook, than with an impertinent Wit that will not allow me time for repose. Such Writings have Charms which never wear out. They are so far from

from losing of their effect by being often read, that they only grow the more Delightful. Their perusal is not a Study, it is an unbending of the Mind. Bright and artificial Pieces dazzle and impose upon the Judgment; but they have such a fine edge that it is quickly blunted. It is neither the difficult, nor the scarce, nor the wonderful that I admire. It is the simple, the lovely, the natural Beauty that hits my Palate. If the Flowers that are trod under foot in a Meadow are as beautiful as those which grow in the most costly Gardens, I love them the better for it. I do not envy another a share in my Enjoyments. The Beautiful wou'd lose nothing of its Value tho' it were common to all Mankind in general; it wou'd be the more estimable. Scarcity is a fault and a poverty of Nature. The Rays of the Sun are not less a Treasure tho' they shine upon the whole Universe. I am for a Beauty so natural that it shou'd not at all work upon me the more upon account of its novelty. I wou'd have its Charms be such as shou'd never decay, and as I shou'd hardly be able to be a moment without.

Decies repetita placebunt.
Horat. Art. Poet. v. 362

Poetry is most undoubtedly a Representation and a Picture. Let us then suppose that *Raphael* were to work upon a Piece. He would never draw whimsical Figures unless his Subject were grotesque. He does not make use of glaring Colours. He is so far from endeavouring to shew his Art, that his greatest care is to conceal it. He would, if possible, deceive the Spectator, and make him fancy his Picture to be Christ himself transfigured upon *Mount Tabor*. His description is good no further than as it is true. Art is defective when it is carried too far. Its chief aim is likeness. Since we take so much pleasure in seeing in a Country Piece of *Titian's*, the Goats climbing up a Precipice, or in one of *Tafniere* a Country Festival, and Rustic Dances; what wonder that in the *Odysssey* we take delight in such simple descriptions of human Life? We fancy that we are in the very Places which *Homer* describes; that we see and hear his Persons. That simplicity of Manners seems to re-call the Golden Age. The good Man *Eumais* touches me much more than a Hero of *Clelia* or of *Cleopatra*. The vain prejudices of our Age take away the relish of such Beauties. But our faults do not diminish the intrinsic value of a Life so reasonable

sonable and so natural. The unhappiness
is theirs who do not feel the Charms of
these Verses.

*Fortunate senex, hic inter flumina nota,
Et fontes sacros frigus capribus opacum.*

Ecl. I. vers. 53.

Nothing can be superior to this descrip-
tion of a Country Life :

O fortunatos nimium, sua si bona norint, &c.

Georg. II. 458.

Every thing in it pleases me, and even
this Place so remote from the Ideas of
Romances,

*at frigida Tempe,
Mugitusque boïum, mollesque sub arbore somni.*

Georg. II. vers. 469, 470.

In the same manner I long for this So-
litude of *Horace's*,

*O rus quando ego te aspiciam, quandoque licebit
Nunc veterum libris, nunc somno, & meritis
horis,*

Ducere sollicita jucunda oblivia vita.

Serm. lib. II. Satyr. 6.

The

The Ancients were not contented with barely Painting after nature; they joyned passion to the truth of description.

Homer never draws a young Man just on the point of falling in Battel, without giving him some touching particularity; he represents him to be full of Courage and Virtue; he gives you a concern, a love for him; he makes you tremble for his danger; he shews you his Father oppressed with old Age, and in continual alarms for the Life of his dear Son; he sets before your Eyes the young Man's new-wedded Spouse, who trembles for her beloved Husband: You tremble with her. It is a kind of Treachery. The Poet moves you with all this beauty and tenderness, only to lead you to the fatal moment, wherein you at once see the Man you are so fond of, weltring in his Blood, and his Eyes closed in an eternal Night.

Virgil took the same care to afflict us for *Pallas* the Son of *Evander*, as *Homer* did to move us in the behalf of *Patroclus*. We are charmed with the grief that we feel for *Nisus* and *Euryalus*. I have seen a young Prince, of but Eight Years of Age, struck with grief at the sight of the danger of the little *Joas*. I have seen him

him impatient at the Great Priest's concealing from *Joas* his Name and his Birth. I have seen him Weep bitterly at hearing these Verses.

*Ah miseram Eurydicen anima fugiente vocabatur
Eurydicen toto referebant flumine ripa.*

Georg. IV. vers. 526, 527.

Did ever any thing come in more properly, or introduce a finer Sentiment than this Dream of *Aeneas's*?

Tempus erat quo prima quies mortalibus aegris,

*Raptatus bigis ut quondam, aterque cruento
Pulvere, perque pedes trajectus tora tumentes;
Hei mihi qualis erat! quantum mutatus ab illo
Hector, qui redit exuvius indutus Achillis, &c.
Ille nihil, nec me quarentem vana moratur, &c.
Æneid. II. vers. 268. 272. & seq.*

Could a turn of Wit have touched the Heart so powerfully? Is it possible to read this Passage without being moved?

*O mihi sola mei super Astyanactis imago
Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat,
Et nunc aquali tecum pubesceret avo.*

Æneid. III. vers. 489. & seq.
Strokes

Strokes of Wit wou'd be intolerably shocking in so passionate a Discourse, where there is no room for any Words but those of Grief.

The Poet never mentions the Death of any Person, without a lively description of some circumstance that may touch the Reader with Compassion for him.

We are grieved for the sake of Virtue when we read this Passage,

————— *cadit & Ripheus justissimus unus
Qui fuit in Teuoris, & servantissimus aequi.
Dius aliter visum* —————

Æneid. II. vers. 426. & seq.

We imagine our selves to be in the middle of Troy, struck with Horror and Compassion, when we read these Verses.

*Tum pavida tectis matre: ingentibus errant :
Amplexaque tenent postes, atque oscula figunt.*

Ibid. vers. 489. & seq.

*Vidi Hecubam, centumque nurus, Priamumque
per aras*

Sanguine sedantem, quos ipse sacraverat ignes.

Ibid. vers. 501, 502.

Arma

*Arma diu senior desueta tremantibus ævo
Circumdat necquicquam humeris, & inutiles
ferrum
Cingitur, ac densos fertur moriturus in hostes.*
Vers. 509. & seq.

*Sic fatus senior, telumque imbelli sine ictu
Conjecit*
Vers. 544

*Nunc morere. Hæc dicens altaria ad ipsa tre-
mentem*

*Traxit & in multo lapsantem sanguine nati,
Implicuitque comam lava, dextraque corasum
Extulit, ac lateri capulo tenus abdidit enses.*
Vers. 550. & seq.

*Hæc finis Priami fatorum; hic exitus illum
Sorte tulit, Trojam incensam, & prolapsa vi-
dentem*

*Pergama, tot quondam populis terrisque superbum
Regnatorem Asia: Facet ingens litore truncus,
Avulsumque humeris caput, & sine nomine corpus.*
Ibid. vers. 554. & seq.

The Poet does not represent the Mis-
fortune of *Eurydice*, without shewing her
just ready once more to see the Light, and
in a moment replunged into the black
Shades of Hell.

Jamque

*Tamque pedem referens casus evaserat omnes,
Redditaque Eurydice superas veniebat ad auras.*

Georg. IV. vers. 485, 486

*Illa, Quis & me, inquit, miseram, & te per-
didit Orpheu?*

*Quis tantus furor? En iterum crudelia retro
Fata vocant, conditque natantia lumina somnus,
Tamque vale. Feror ingenti circumdata nocte
Invalidasque tibi vendens, heu non tua, palmas.*

Ibid. vers. 494 & seq.

The Pain of an Animal which this Poet
sets as it were before our Eyes afflicts us:

*Propter aqua rivum viridi procumbit in ulva
Perdita, nec seris meminit decedere nocti.*

Ecl. VIII. vers. 87, & seq.

The Pestilence raging among the Beasts
is a Picture that moves us:

*Hinc letis vituli vulgo mæriantur in herbis,
Et dulces animas plena ad præsepia reddunt.*

*Libitant infelix studiorum atque immemor herba
Pector equus, fontesque avertitur, & pede terram
Cæbra fexit*

*Eccæ autem dura fumans sub vomere rarus
Concidit & mixtum spumis vomit ore cruorem,*

Extre-

*Extremosque ciet gemitus - it tristis arator
 Maerentem abjungens fraterna morte juvenum,
 Atque opere in medio defixa relinquit aratra.
 Non umbrae altorum nemorum, non molles possunt
 Præa movere animum, non qui per saxa volutus
 Purior electro campum petit amnis.*

Georg. III. vers. 494. & seq.

Virgil gives Life and Passion to every Thing. In his Verses every Thing thinks and has sensation. The very Trees have Passions.

*Exiit ad cælum ramis foliisque arbor
 Miraturque novas frondet, & non sua poma.*

Georg. II. vers. 81, 82.

A Flower wins your pity, when Virgil draws it just fading away.

*Purpureus velut cum flos succisus aratro
 Languescit moriens:*

Æneid. IX. vers. 435.

You think you see the least Plants that the Spring revives, adorns and rejoyces.

*Inque novos soles audent se gramina tutò
 Credere*

Georg. II. vers. 331.

G

A Night.

A Nightingale is *Philomela*, moving your
Compassion for her Misfortunes :

Qualis popule a moerens Philomela sub umbra, &c.
Georg. IV. vers. 311.

Horace in three Verses draws a Picture,
in which every Thing has Life, and gives
an Image.

fugit retro
Levis juvenas & decor, arida
Pellente lascivos amores
Canitie, facilemque somnum.
Lib. 11. Od. 11. v. 5 & seq.

Wou'd he with two strokes of his
Pencil describe two Men that no body
can mistake for any other? He sets be-
fore your Eyes the incorrigible folly of
Paris, and the implacable resentment of
Achilles.

Quid Paris? ut saluus regnet, vivatque beatus
Cogi posse negat, &c.
Jura neget sibi nata, nihil non arroget armis.
Lib. 1. Ep. 2. vers. 10. & seq.

Wou'd *Horace* make us in Love with
the Place where he cou'd wish to end his
A Days

Days with his Friend ? He gives us a de-
sire to go thither :

*Ille terrarum mihi præter omnes : omnia illo
Angulus ridet.*

Ibi tu calentem

*Debita sparges lachrymâ favillam
Hæres amici.*

Lib. 2. Od. 6. vers. 13. & seq.

Does he draw a Picture of *Ulysses* ? He
paints him Superiour to Storms, or even
to Shipwrecks, or the Cruellest Fortune

*aspera multa
Pertulit adversis rerum immersabilis undis.*

Lib. 1. Ep. 2. vers. 21.

Does he describe *Rome* Invincible, even
under her Misfortunes ? Hear him :

Duris ut illex tonsa bipennibus

Per damna, per cades ab ipso

Ducit opes, animumque ferro.

Non hydra secto corpore firmior, &c.

Lib. 4. Od. 4. vers. 57. & seq.

Catullus, who is not to be named with-
out abhorrence of his Obscenities, is the

height

height of Perfection for passionate Simplicity :

*Odi & amo; quare id faciam fortasse requiris.
Nescio, sed fieri sentio, & excrucior.*

Epigr. 86.

How far inferior are *Ovid* and *Martial* with their studied Conceits, to these negligent Words, in which the afflicted Heart alone speaks in a kind of Despair?

What can be more simple, and at the same time more touching, than Priam reduced in his old Age, to kiss * the murdering Hands of Achilles, which had rob'd him of so many of his Children? He begs of him the Body of the great Hector, as the only mitigation of his Misery; he had spoilt all, had he given his Words the least Ornament: and therefore they barely express his Grief. He conjures him by his own Father, oppressed with old Age, to have Pity upon the most wretched of all Fathers.

Wit has the ill luck to weaken the great Passions which it wou'd adorn. Poetry, according to *Hobbes*, is nothing if it be only Bright and Witty; it must be ~~and have some other quality~~
~~which is not to be named with~~
~~only his abilities.~~ Moving,

Moving, Lovely, and consequently Simple, Natural and Passionate.

*Non satis est pulchra esse Poëmata: dulcia sunt;
Et quocumque volent, animum auditores agunto.*

Horat. Art. Poet. vers. 99. 100.

He that would have Spectators share his Grief,
Must write not only well, but movingly,
And raise Men's Passions to what height he will.

Rosc. Transl.

The beautiful, which is only beautiful,
that is to say, bright, has but half its
beauty; it shou'd express the passions in
a lively manner, in order to inspire them;
it shou'd take full possession of the Heart,
and turn it to the just Design of a Poem.



A PLAN for a Treatise upon Tragedy.

VI.

WE are first to make a distinction between Tragedy and Comedy. The one is a representation of great Events that stir up violent passions. The other is confined to the description of the Manners of Men in a private condition.

As for Tragedy, I must begin with declaring that I by no means wish for the perfection of such Spectacles as represent the corrupt passions only in order to enflame them. We are told that *Plato*, and all the wise Legislators, even among Pagans, did utterly reject out of every well regulated Commonwealth all Fables, and all Musical Instruments, which might render a Nation effeminate, by giving it a relish for Voluptuousness. What then shou'd be the Severity of Christians against all contagious Spectacles? I am so far from desiring the improvment of such Entertainments, that I feel a real Joy for their being among us Imperfect in their kind.

kind. Our Poets have made them languid, weak and infirm like Romances. Every Word is of Chains, Pains and Torments. The Lover dies in mighty good health. A Woman of very moderate Beauty is called a Sun forsooth, or at least an *Albion*. Her Eyes are two bright Luminaries. Every Expression is extravagantly and there is nothing that denotes a true Passion. So much the better: The weakness of the Poisson diminishes the Danger. But I am of opinion that Tragedies are capable of being made wonderfully strong, according to those most Philosophical Ideas of the Ancients, without the least mixture of that lawless inconstant Passion, which is the cause of so much Destruction.

Tragedy among the *Greeks* was wholly independant of prophane Love. For instance, the *Oedipus* of *Sophocles* has not a word of that passion, because it is foreign to the Subject. The other Tragedies of that great Poet are Wrote in the same manner. M. *Corneille* did but weaken his Action, and by making it double draw off the attention of the Spectator, in his *Oedipus*, by the Episode of a cold Passion between *Thesens* and *Dirce*. M. *Racine* fell into the same inconvenience in his *Phaedra*.

He

He made a double Play of it, by joyning to the Distracted *Phædra*, *Hippolytus* fighting contrary to His true Character. *Phædra* shou'd have stood alone in her Madness. The Action wou'd then have been single, short, passionate, and rapid. But our two Tragic Poets, who else deserve the greatest Elogiums, were carried away with the Stream. They submitted to the taste of Romance which prevailed. The Mode of Wit brought Love into every thing. It was thought impossible to avoid being disgusted for two Hours together, but with the assistance of some intrigue of Gallantry. It was thought fashionable to be impatient at the noblest and most passionate Entertainment, unless some whining Hero came in to interrupt it. Nay, every Sigh must be set off with Points, and Despair be expressed in a sort of Epigram. How much the desire of pleasing the Publick can draw from Authors contrary to the Rules! Hence comes this conceited piece of Passion.

*Thou greedy thirst of Fame whose strong impulse
Drives me to Death to give my Memory life,
A little yet forbear thy strict demand,
And e'er my Life is sacrificed to thee
Allow at least a wretched Sigh to Love.*

It

It was not sufferable for a Man to die
of Grief, without points and quibbles in
his last moments.

Hence comes this turgid and flourishing
Despair.

*Struck to the very Heart, a Blow as Mortal
As Unforeseen*

*Wretched Avenger of too just a Quarrel,
And wretched Object of unjust Commands*

Never did real Grief speak so pompous
and so affected a Language.

I think it would also be necessary to re-
trench from Tragedy, those vain far-
fetched Thoughts, which were so contra-
ry to probability. For instance, these
Verses have something strangely extra-
gant.

Impatient Wishes of a brave Revenge,

Who owe your Being to a Father's Death,

Oh ye impetuous Children of resentment,

Blindly Embraced by my misguided Anger, &c.

Cornelle's Cinna Act. I. Sc. I.

Baillet observed in these Words a Ge-
nealogy of impatient wishes of a brave re-
venge, which were the impetuous Children
of a noble resentment, and which were em-
braced

braced by a misguided Anger. Persons of Figure, that speak with Passion in a Tragedy, shou'd indeed speak with greatness and vivacity: But Men speak naturally, and without those laboured Conceits, when Passion dictates. No Body wou'd willingly be condoled by a Friend in his Misfortunes, with so many witty turns of Thought.

Racine was not free from this Defect, which Custom had made almost necessary. Nothing can be less natural, than the narration of *Hippolytus's* Death, at the end of the Tragedy of *Phædra*, which otherwise has great beauties in it. *Theramenes*, who comes to inform *Theseus* of the dreadful fate of his Son, shou'd have spoke but these Three Words, and hardly have had strength to pronounce even them distinctly. *Hippolytus is dead. A Monster sent from the bottom of the Sea has devoured him. I saw it. Can a Man so struck, so afflicted, so out of breath, be supposed to fall into a pompous and florid description of the Sea Monster?*

*L'œil morne maintenant & la tête baissée
Sembloient se conformer à sa triste pensée, &c.
La terre s'en émeut, l'air en est infecté,
Le flot qui l'apporta, recule épouvanté.*

Racine, Phæd. Act. V. Sc. VI. &c.
Sophocles

Sophocles is very far from having any of this untimed improbable Elegance. He puts into the Mouth of *Oedipus* nothing but interrupted Words. Each Sillable is Grief. * *lōu, lōu : aī, aī, aī, aī : pēu, pēu.* It is rather a Groaning or a Crying, than a Speech. *Alas, alas!* says he; it is all made clear. O Light, this is the last time I shall behold you! — *Alas! Alas! Woe, woe be upon me! Wretch that I am, where am I! How comes it that of a sudden my Voice fails me! — O Fortune whither art thou fled! Wretch, Wretch, I fell a dreadful fury at the memory of my Miseries! — O Friends, what now can I see, or love, or discourse, or hear with Comfort! O Friends, cast far from you immediately a Villain, an execrable Villain, the Horror of Gods and Men! — Cursed be the Man that loosed me from my Bonds in the Desert where I was exposed, and that saved my Life. How cruel was his Pity! I might then have died with less Sorrow to me and mine. — I shou'd neither have been the Murderer of my Father, nor the Husband of my Mother; now I am at the height of wretchedness. Miserable Man! I have defiled my Parents, and have had Children of her that brought me into the World,*

It is thus that Nature speaks when she is oppressed with Grief. Never was any thing more remote from the bright Sentiments of a professed Wit. *Hercules* and *Philoctetes* talk with the same Sorrow in *Sophocles*.

Racine, who had carefully studied the great models of Antiquity, had formed the Plan of a *French* Tragedy of *Oedipus*, in the taste of *Sophocles*, without mixing any impertinent intrigue of Love, and exactly according to the Greek Simplicity. Such a Piece might have been very curious, very lively, very rapid, very moving. It would not be applauded: but it would strike; it would draw Tears; it would not suffer us to breathe; it would inspire the love of Virtue, and the abhorrence of Vice; it would very usefully promote the end of the best Laws. Even the purest Religion would not be at all alarmed at it. Nothing would be retrenched from it, but those false Ornaments which are against the Rules.

Our cramping versification often obliges our best Tragic Poets to load their Verses with epithets in order to catch the Rhyme. To one good Verse they join a weak one that murders the first. For instance, I am charmed when I read this an-

swer

swer given by a Father, to one that asked
him what his Son could have done against
three,

Dye,

Corn. in his *Honour*

But I cannot bear this Verse which the
Rhyme presently logs in;

Or by a brave Despair win Victory.

The extravagant periphrases of our Ver-
ses have nothing of the Natural. They do
not shew a Man talking in a serious, no-
ble, and passionate Conversation. It is
depriving the Spectator of the greatest
pleasure of the Diversion, to take away
that probability. I confess the Ancients
allowed some magnificence of Language
to the *Bucina*.

An tragica deservit Crispus illatur infortis
Horat. Epist. 1. 1. Ep. 30. 1. 1.

But the *Bucina* ought not to alter the
imitation of true nature. It can only
paint it somewhat more great and beau-
tiful. But Men shou'd always speak like
Men. Nothing is more ridiculous, for a
Hero

Hero in the greatest Actions of his Life,
nor to join to Nobleness and Strength, a
Simplicity that is very remote from bombast :

Proicit ampullas & sesqui pedalia verba.

Horat. Art. Poet. v. 97.

It is enough if the Poet makes *Agamemnon* speak haughtily, *Achilles* with anger, *Ulysses* with prudence, *Medea* with fury. But the pompous rank debases every thing. The greater and stronger the Passions are which we represent, the more noble and vehement shou'd be the Simplicity.

I even think that we have often made the *Romans* talk too fastidious a Language. They thought imperiously; but they spoke with moderation. It was indeed the *Commanding Nation*, * *Populum laud Regem*; but that Nation was as affable in its way of expressing it self in Society, as vigorous to conquer those People that were jealous of its power.

Parcere subjectos & debellare superbos.

Idem *Æneid*. VI. v. 843.

Virg. Æneid. i. v. 23.

Hero

H

Horace

Horace has given them the same description in other terms:

*Imperet bellante prior, idcentem
Lenis in hostem.*

Carm. Sæcul. 4. 51, 52.

There does not seem to be proportion enough between the Emphasis with which *Augustus* speaks in the Tragedy of *Cinna*, and the modest Simplicity with which *Suetonius* has drawn him in every particular of his Manners. He allowed Rome so great an appearance of the ancient Liberty of the Republic, that he would not suffer any Man to call him Lord. *Manu vultuque indecoras adulationes repressit, & in sequenti die gravissimo corripuit edicto, Dominumque se passhaci appellari ne alibi quidem aut nepotibus, vel serio vel joco Passus est.* In consulari pedibus fere, extra consularium saepe adopenâ sella per publicum incescit. Promiscuis salutationibus admittebat & plebem. — quoties magistratum comitiis interesset tribus cum candidatis suis circuibat, supplicabatque more solemnî. Ferebat et ipse suffragium in tribus, ut unus d' populo. — Filiam ex nepros ita instituit, ut etiam lanificio assue-

† Suet. aug.

faceret.— Habitavit in adibus modicis Hor-
 tensianis, neque laxitate, neque cultu conspi-
 cuis, ut in quibus porticus breves essent.— Et
 sine marmore ullo aut insigni pavimento con-
 spicua, ac per annos amplius XL, eodem cu-
 biculo hieme & aestate mansit.— Instrumenti
 ejus et supelletilis parsimonia apparet etiam
 nunc residuis lectis atque mensis, quorum ple-
 traque vix private elegantia sint.— Cœnam
 trinis ferculis, aut, cum abundantissime senis,
 præbebat, ut non nimio sumptu, ita summa
 comitate.— Vestè non temerè alia quam do-
 mesticâ usus est ab uxore et sorore et filiâ,
 neptibusque confecta.— Cibi minimi erat at-
 que vulgaris serè, &c. Pomp and bombast
 agree much less with what was called the
 Roman Civility, than with the Pride of a
 Persian Monarch: Notwithstanding the
 severity of Tiberius, and the servile flat-
 tery into which the Romans fell in his days,
 and under his Successors, we are told by Pliny,
 that Trajan still lived like a sociable good
 Citizen in an amiable familiarity. The
 Answers of that Emperor are short, sim-
 ple, direct, remote from all tumidity.
 The Basso Relievo of his Column always
 represents him in the most modest Atti-
 tude, even when he is described command-
 ing the Legions. Whatever we read in
 Livy, Plutarch, Cicero, Suetonius, represents

to us, the *Romans* as Men haughty indeed in their Sentiments, but simple, natural, and modest in their Words. They bear no similitude with the ranting Heroes of our Romances. A great Man does not declaim like an Actor: He speaks in Conversation in strong and apt terms. He says nothing mean: but he says nothing bombastical and far fetched.

*Ne quicumq; Deus, quicumque adhibebitur heros,
Regali conspectus in auro nuper & ostro,
Migret in obscuras humili sermone tabernas,
Aut dum vitat humum, nubes & inania captet,
Ut festis, &c.*

Horat. Art. Poet. vers. 227. & seq.

The nobleness of the Tragic Stile, shou'd not hinder the Heroes from talking with Simplicity, in proportion to the nature of the things on which they discourse.

Es tragicus plerumq; dolet sermone pedestri.

But I have

PLAN of a Treatise upon Comedy.

VII.

COMEDY paints the Manners of Men in a private Condition; Therefore it ought to be deliver'd in a lower key than Tragedy. The Sock is inferior to the Buskin; but certain Men in the lowest Circumstances, as well as in the highest, have naturally a Character of Arrogance;

Trisusque Chremes tumido delirigat ore.

Horat. Art. Poet. vers. 94.

I confess the pleasant strokes of *Aristophanes*, to me are often mean. They have a strong taint of the Farce, and are wrote on purpose to amuse and tickle the People. What can be more ridiculous than the description of a King of *Persia* in march with an Army of Forty thousand Men, to go to satisfy the Infirmities of Nature upon a Mountain of Gold.

Our respect of Antiquity shou'd be great, but I have the authority of the Ancients

Ancients against the Ancients. *Horace* teaches me to judge of *Plautus*:

At nostri proavi Plautinos & numeros, & Laudavere sales, nimium patienter utrumque, Ne dicam stulti, mirati, si modo ego, & vos Scimus inurbanum lepidum seponere dicto.

Ibid. vers. 270. & seq.

Can it be the bold jests of *Plautus* that *Cæsar* could have wished to find in *Terence*? *Vix comica.* *Menander* had given this latter a pure and exquisite taste. *Scipio* and *Lælius*, the Friends of *Terence*, delicately distinguished in his favour between what *Horace* calls *lepidum*, and what is *inurbanum*. That Comic Poet has an inimitable plainness, which charms and moves by the bare recital of a very common incident.

Sic cogitabam, Hem, hic parva consuetudinis Causâ mortem hujus tam fort. familiariter. Quid si amasset? Quid mihi hic faciet patri? Effertur. Imus, &c.
IV. nob. bid. Terent. Andr. Act. 1. Scen. 1.

What follows is passionate:

Hinc illa lachryma, hac illa est misericordia.

Ibidem.

Here is another Recital dictated by Passion, and Passion only:

Memor essem? O Mysis, Mysis, etiam nunc mihi

Scripta illa dicta sunt in animo, Chrysidis

De Glycerio: Jam ferme moriens me vocat:

Accessi: vos semota: nos soli: incipit,

Mi Pamphile, hujus formam atque atatem vides, &c.

Quod ego te per hanc dextram oro, & ingenium tuum,

Per tuam fidem, perque hujus solitudinem

Te obtestor, &c.

Te isti virum do, amicum, tutorem, patrem, &c.

Hanc mi in manum dat, mors continuo ipsam occupat.

Accepi; acceptam servabo.

Ibid. Scen. VI.

Any thing of Wit that shou'd be added to those plain and moving Words, wou'd only weaken them. The following denote even Extacy.

Neq;

*Neq; virgo est usquam, neque ego, qui illam
conspicere amisi meo.*

*Ubi quæram, ubi investigem, quem perconter,
quàm insistant viam?*

*Incertus sum: Una hæc spes est, ubi ubi est,
diu celari non potest.*

Terent. Eunuch. Act. 2. Scen. IV

The same Passion speaks again here
with the same vivacity:

Egone quid velim? Cum milite

Iste præsens, absens ut sies, &c.

Ibid. Act. 1. Scen. 2.

Could one wish for a more lively or
more ingenious Drama?

It must be owned, *Mollero* is a great
Comic Poet. I will even venture to say
that he struck farther than *Terence* in-
to some Characters. He wrote upon a
greater variety of Subjects. He has drawn
with bold touches almost every thing that
we see of the irregular and ridiculous. *Te-
rence* confines himself to the representa-
tion of covetous and suspicious Fathers,
lavish and vicious Sons, impudent and
greedy Courtisans, flattering and sordid
Parasites, tricking and saucy Slaves. Those
Cha-

Characters were certainly worth handling, with respect to the manners of the *Greeks* and *Romans*. Besides, we have but six Plays of that great Author. But *Moliere* has opened a Path wholly unknown. Once more I repeat it, I think him a great Poet. But may I not speak as freely of his Defects?

Though he thinks well, he often writes ill. He uses the most forced, and the least natural Expressions. *Terence* says in four Words with the most elegant Simplicity, what *Moliere* wou'd not say without a multitude of Metaphors, that wou'd almost make it Nonsense. I like his Prose much better than his Verse: For instance, the *Miser* has fewer Faults, than his Dramatical Pieces in Rhyme. It is true the *French* Versification was a restraint upon him. It is also true, that there are better Lines in his *Amphytrion*, where he made bold to write irregular Verses, than in his other Plays. But in general he seems to me, even in his Prose, not to speak with Simplicity enough to express all the Passions.

Besides, he has often overloaded his Characters. He meant by that freedom to please the Pit, to accommodate himself to the less delicate among his Spectators,

tors, and to strengthen the ridicule. But tho' a Poet shou'd draw each Passion in its greatest degree, and paint it with the most lively strokes, in order to make the excess and deformity of it the more apparent, yet there is no occasion for forcing Nature, and deviating from probability. Thus notwithstanding the example of *Plautus*, in whom we read, *cedo tertium*, I affirm, against *Moliere*, that a *Miser*, in his Senses, can never go so far as to ask to look in the third hand of a Man whom he suspects of having robb'd him.

Another fault of *Moliere*, which several Persons of Wit forgive, but which I can by no means pardon, is, that he gives a graceful turn to Vice, and a ridiculous and odious austerity to Virtue. I know his Defenders will not fail to say that he has treated real Probity with honour, that he has only attack'd a morose Virtue, and a detestable Hypocrisy. But without entering into a long Dispute, I maintain that *Plato* and the other Legislators of the Pagan Antiquity, wou'd never have allowed in their Republicks such a Ridicule upon good Manners.

To Conclude, I cannot help thinking with *Boileau*, that *Moliere*, who with so much strength and beauty paints the Manners

ners of his Countrymen, falls too low, when he imitates the mean Farce of the *Italian Theatre*.

In Scapin's Sack, the Misantrope I lose.

Boil. Art. of Poet. Cant. III.

PLAN of a Treatise upon History.

VIII.

I Believe it would be very much for the honour of the Academy, to procure us a Treatise upon History. There are very few Historians that are free from gross Faults: And yet History is of the utmost importance. It is She that points out to us great Examples, that turns even the Vices of bad Men to the instruction of the Good, that clears up the Origin of Nations, and that explains the means by which they passed from one Government to another.

The faithful Historian is of no Age, or Nation. Tho' he loves his Country, he never flatters it in any particular.

The

The *French* Historian shou'd stand neuter between *France* and *England*. He shou'd as freely give the due Praise to *Talbot*, as to *du Guesclin*. He does as much justice to the warlike Genius of the Prince of *Wales*, as to the Wisdom of *Charles V.*

He equally avoids Panegyric and Satire. He deserves credit no farther, than as he confines himself to relate both Good and Evil without either Flattery or Malice. He omits no Circumstance that may help to paint the principal Persons and to discover the causes of events. But he forbears all such discussions as only tend to shew the Learning of the Author. His whole Criticism consists in giving for Dubious what is so, and to leave the decision of it to the Reader, after having informed him of all that History says of the matter. The Man that is more a Scholar than an Historian, and who has more of Criticism in him, than of true Genius, will not bate his Reader the least date, the least superfluous fact, the least accident, tho' never so dry or impertinent. He follows his own taste, without consulting that of the Public. He wou'd make every Body as curious as himself of minute Circumstances, to which his insatiable Curiosity is wholly directed.

On the contrary, a prudent and weighty Historian drops all insignificant facts that lead the Reader to no point of importance. You may cut away those Facts, and not in the least affect the Piece. These do but interrupt and withdraw the History, and make it a mere Collection of Scraps, without any Thred of brisk Narration. This superstitious exactness shou'd be left to Compilers. The chief business is to open the very bottom of things to the Reader as soon as possible, to shew him the Chain of Events, and to bring him speedily to the unravelling of the Story. History shou'd in this be somewhat like the Epic Poem :

*Semper ad eventum festinat, & in medias res,
&c.*

Desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit.

Art. Poet. vers. 184. & seq.

There are many loose Facts, that instruct us no farther than in barren Names and Dates: It is not at all more useful to know, than not to know those Names. I am not e'er the more acquainted with a Man from being barely informed how he is called: I wou'd sooner chuse to read an Historian of but little exactness, and

mode-

moderate judgment, who murders the Names, but gives a good clear account of the Story, like *Froissard*, than those Historians who tell me that *Charlemagne* held his Parliament at *Ingelheim*, that then he left that place; that he went and fought the *Saxons*, and that he returned to *Aix la Chapelle*: This is saying e'en nothing at all. Without the Circumstances, the Facts seem to want their Flesh, they make no more than the Skeleton of a History.

The chief beauty of a History lies in the Order and Disposition. To arrive at this delightful Order, the Historian ought to be perfect Master of his Story. He ought to see it at one glance from one end to t'other. He must turn it this way and that, till he has found his truest point of view. He must shew its unity, and draw as it were from one Source all the principal Events that depend upon it. By this, he gives his Reader the most profitable Instruction that can arise from it; he communicates to him the pleasure of foreseeing what must follow: he makes him take part in the Success: he sets before his Eyes a System of the Affairs of each period: he enables him to judge what is most likely to result from it: he sets him upon reasoning, without doing

ing it himself: he avoids abundance of repetitions: nay, his Narration is much more easily retained, by means of the connection of the Facts: I repeat concerning History that passage in *Horace* which regards the Epic Poem:

*Ordinis hac virtus erit, & Venus aut ego fallor:
Ut jam nunc dicat, jam nunc debentia dici
Pleraque differat: & praesens intempus omittat.*
Art. Poet. vers. 42. & seq.

A dry heavy Writer of Annals, knows of no Order but that of Chronology. He repeats a Fact every time he has occasion to relate any thing that depends upon that Fact: he dares not put a Narration either backwards or forwards. On the contrary, the Historian that has a true Genius, chuses out of twenty places, that in which a Fact will stand in the best light, so as to disperse clearness upon all the rest. Oftentimes a Fact pointed to beforehand at a distance, clears up every thing that prepares it: and sometimes another Fact will shew better for being told afterwards. By appearing later, it will come in more properly to be the cause of other events. This *Cicero* compares to the Care that a Man of a polite fancy

fancy takes to set good Pictures in an advantageous light : * *Videtur tamquam tabulas bene pictas collocare in bono lumine.*

Thus the Reader has the satisfaction to Proceed continually onwards without distraction, to see one event still rising out of another, and to look for the end which escapes him only to make him more impatient to come to it. When he has done reading he looks behind him like a curious Traveller, who being come to the top of a Hill, turns round, and takes delight in viewing from that Station the way which he had held, and all the pleasant spots thro' which he had passed.

A Circumstance well chosen, a Saying well told, a particularity of Behaviour that bears some relation to the genius or humour of a Man, is an original Stroke, and very beautiful in a History. It gives you a thorow Notion of the whole Man. This is what *Plutarch* and *Suetonius* never failed to do : This is what we find with pleasure in Cardinal *D'Ossat*. You wou'd think you saw *Clement VIII.* speaking at one time with openness of Heart, and at another with reserve.

* De claris Oratoribus. num. 261.

An Historien shou'd never be full of superfluous Epithets, or any other unnecessary Ornaments of Discourse. By this self-denyal he will make his History more concise, more lively, more simple, more graceful. He shou'd by pure Narration inspire the most solid Morality without moralizing. He shou'd avoid Sentences like so many Rocks. His History will be sufficiently embellished, if to an artful Method, he joins a clear, a short and a noble Diction. * *Nihil est in historia, says Cicero, purâ & illustri brevitâte dulcius.* History is very much tarnish'd by numerous Ornaments. Nothing is more worthy of Cicero than this observation upon Caesar's Commentaries: † *Commentarios quosdam scripsit, rerum suarum, valde quidem probandos. NUDI enim sunt, recti, & venusti, omni ornatu orationis tanquam veste detracta. Sed dum voluit alios habere paratos, unde sumerent, qui vellent scribere historiam, INEPTIS gratum fortasse fecit, qui volunt illa calamistris, inurere, sanos quidem homines, & scribendo deterruit.* A Wit despises a naked History. He wou'd dress it, adorn it with Imbroidery, and crisp it. It is an

* De claris Oratoribus. num. 262.

† Ibid.

error, *nequit*: A Man of a clear Taste, and sound Judgment, thinks it impossible to add any Charm to so noble and so majestic a Nakedness.

The most necessary, and the most rare accomplishment in an Historian, is to know exactly the form of Government, and turn of Manners, in each Age, of the Nation whose History he writes. A Painter that is ignorant of what is called *il costume*, can draw nothing with Truth. The Painters of the School of Lombardy, who otherwise have represented Nature so artfully, have wanted Learning in this particular. They draw the High Priest of the Jews, like a Pope; and the ancient Greeks like the Men that they saw in Lombardy. And yet nothing would be more false nor more shocking, than to paint the French Men of Henry the 8th's time with Perukes and Cravats, or to describe those of Ours with Beards and Ruffs. Each Nation differs vastly in its Manners from its Neighbours: Each People often varies from its own. The Persians, during the Childhood of *Cyrus, were as plain, as the Medes their Neighbours were effeminate and luxurious. The Per-

* Cyroped.

flans afterwards sunk into the same Vanity and Softness. An Historian wou'd shew the grossest ignorance if he represented the Diet of *Curius* or *Fabritius*, as he would the Feasts of *Lucullus* or *Apicius*. We shou'd laugh at an Historian that talks of the magnificent Court of the *Spartan* Kings, or of *Numa*. He shou'd describe the powerful and happy poverty of the first *Romans*,

Parvum, potentem, &c.

Parvum, beatum, &c.

Virgil. *Aeneid*. VI. v. 843.

He shou'd not forget how simple and hardy the *Greeks* were, yet in *Alexander's* time, in comparison of the *Asiatics*. * *Catridemus's* Speech to *Darius* sufficiently evinces it. The plain House in which *Augustus* lived forty Years, must by no means be represented like the Palace of Gold which *Nero* soon afterwards erected.

Roma domus fiet: Vetus migrat Quirites,

Si non & Vetus occupat ista domus.

Our Nation should not be described as if it had always been the same. It has had continual changes. An Historian that should draw *Clovis* surrounded by a polite Galant, magnificent Court, would be little the better for the truth of his particular Facts; he would be utterly mistaken in the principal point of the Manners of the whole Nation. The *Franks* were not much better at that time, than a wandering savage Band, almost without either Laws or Polity, and subsisting upon nothing but Inroads and Invasions. The *Gauls* polished by the *Romans*, must not be confounded with those barbarous *Franks*. A Ray of politeness should appear in the Reign of *Charlemagne*, but it should presently be lost. The sudden Decadence of his Family again, threw Europe into a frightful state of Ignorance. *St. Louis* was a Prodigy of Reason and Virtue in an Iron Age. We are scarce got out of that tedious Night. The resurrection of Arts and Letters began in *Italy*, and came very late into *France*. Flashy Subtleties of Wit retarded its progress.

The Changes in the Form of Government of a Nation ought to be closely observed. For instance, at first we had *Salique*

lique Lands distinguished from other E-
 states, and allotted for the Military part
 of the Nation. We shou'd never confound
 the *Beneficiary Earldoms* of *Charlemagne's*
 time, which were only personal Employ-
 ments, with the *Hereditary Earldoms*,
 which under his Successors became Set-
 tlements in Families. We shou'd make
 a distinction between the Parliaments of
 the second Race, which were the Assem-
 blies of the People, and the several Par-
 liaments erected by the Kings of the third
 Race in the Provinces for the tryal of
 private Causes. The Historian shou'd
 know the origin of Fiefs, the service of
 Feuditaries, the enfranchisement of Vil-
 lains, the increase of Corporations, the
 erection of the Third Estate, the intro-
 duction of Clerks Practitioners to be the
 Counsellors of the Nobles that had but lit-
 tle knowlege in the Laws, and the establi-
 shment of Troops in the King's pay, to
 avoid the Surprizes of the *English*, who
 had settled themselves in the heart of the
 Kingdom. The Manners and State of
 the whole Body of the Nation have chan-
 ged from Age to Age. Without going
 any farther back, the alteration of Man-
 ners since the Reign of *Henry* the IVth is
 incredible. It is a hundred times more
 useful

useful to observe these Revolutions of the whole Nation, than barely to relate particular Facts.

If a Man of judgement set himself to lay down Rules for History, he might join Examples to Precepts. He might give his Opinion of the Historians of all Ages. He might observe that an excellent Historian is perhaps more rarely found than even a great Poet.

Herodotus who is called the Father of History, is a perfect Master of Narration. The variety of his Subjects is not a small part of his beauty; but his Work is rather a Collection of Accounts of divers Countries, than a History that has Unity disposed in a true Order.

Xenophon has only wrote a Journal in his Retreat of the Ten thousand. Every part is exact and minute, but uniform. His *Cyropedia* is rather a Philosophical Romance, as *Cicero* believed, than a true History.

Polybius is well skilled in the Art of War and in Policy; but he reasons too much, tho' he reasons admirably well. He exceeds the bounds of a mere Historian. He unfolds each Event by its Cause. His Work is a piece of Anatomy.

my. He shews almost by mechanical Rules that such a People must necessarily overcome that other People, and that such a Treaty made between Rome and Carthage cannot possibly last.

Thucydides and *Livy* have inserted very fine Harangues; but it is not improbable that instead of being quotations, they are of their own composing. It is hard to believe that they copied them from the Originals. *Livy* was by no means so well acquainted with the Military Affairs of his Age, as *Polybius*.

Salust wrote with singular Beauty and Nobleness, but he enlarges too much upon description of Manners and Persons, in two very short Histories.

Tacitus shews abundance of Genius, with a perfect knowledge of the most corrupted Hearts; but he too much affects a mysterious brevity. He is too full of Poetical turns in his Descriptions. He has too much Wit: he refines too much: he often ascribes to the most subtle Springs of Policy, what really proceeded only from a mistake, from a fantasticalness of humour, from a Caprice. The greatest Events are often occasioned by the most contemptible Causes. It might be Weakness, Habit,

bit, false Shame, Rage, the advice of a freed Man, that did the business, while ~~Tiberius~~ labours to find out the greatest refinements in the Counsels of the Emperor. The generality of Men are superficial, and in a medium to Good, as well as to Evil. *Tiberius*, one of the worst Men that the World ever saw, was more hurried away by his Fears, than guided by a settled Scheme.

D'Aulle reads delightfully, but he speaks as if he had admittance into the most secret Counsels. One and the same Person could never have had the Confidence of all the opposite Parties. Besides, each Man must needs have had some Secret, that he would never have discovered to the Historian. We know the Truth but by halves. The Writer who won't inform me of what I am sure he cannot possibly know himself, makes me inclined to doubt even those Facts which he might know.

Such a Criticism upon Ancient and Modern Historians would be very useful and very agreeable, without being offensive to any living Author.

This Undertaking. Consult its Assemblies. For instance, the Author of the Rhetoric may propose his Gen-
Answer
 tlemen

*Answer to an Objection
against these several
PLANS.*

IX.

THERE is an Objection which will infallibly be started against all that I have been saying: namely, that the Academy will never adopt these several Works as its own, without having first examin'd them. Now it is hardly probable that an Author, after having taken an infinite deal of Pains, will submit his whole Performance to the correction of a numerous Assembly, where Opinions will perhaps be very much divided. There is consequently but small likelihood that the Academy will adopt such a Performance.

My Answer is short. I suppose that indeed the Academy will not adopt it: but will only Encourage particular Persons to this Undertaking. Each of those Persons Consult its Assemblies. For instance, the Author of the Rhetoric may propose his doubts concerning Eloquence. The Gentlemen

tllemen of the Academy may give him their Opinions, which perhaps may be various. The Author may make his own use of them, and follow which he pleases, without offence to any.

The Disputes that wou'd arise in the Assemblies upon such Questions, might be reduced into Writing in a kind of Journal, which the Secretary might keep without the least Partiality. That Journal wou'd indeed consist of so many short Dissertations, which wou'd make great Improvements in Taste and Criticism. This Emploment wou'd render the Gentlemen of the Academy more constant at the Assemblies. The Advantage and Glory of it wou'd be great throughout all *Europe*.

X.

IT is true, the Academy might often happen to be divided upon those Questions. The Love of the Ancients in some, and that of the Moderns in others, might hinder them from being of one Opinion. But I am not in the least alarmed at the thoughts of a Civil War which wou'd be carried on with so much Affability, Politeness, and Moderation. The Point is such

such as will allow every one free liberty to follow his own Taste, and his own *Idols*. This Emulation may ever be of use to Literature. May I presume to declare my Thoughts upon the Subject?

1. I begin with wishing sincerely that the Moderns may excel the Ancients. I shou'd be overjoyed to see in our Age, and in our Nation, Orators more vehement than *Demosthenes*, and Poets more sublime than *Homer*. It wou'd be so far from being a Misfortune, that it wou'd be a very great Benefit to the World. The Ancients wou'd be no less Valuable than they have always been, and the Moderns wou'd be so many new Ornaments to Human Nature. The Ancients wou'd still retain the Glory of having been the beginners, of having pointed out the way, and of having furnished the means by which they were overcome.

2. It wou'd be the highest folly to judge of a Work by its date.

*Et nisi quæ terris semota, suisque
Temporibus desuncta videt, fastidit, & odit.
Sic, quia Græcorum sunt antiquissima quæque
Scripta vel optima*

*Scire velim pretium chartæ, quæ us ardeat annus.
Qui readit ad fastos, & diuturnæ æstimat annus.*

Mira-

*Miraturque nihil, nisi quod Libitina sacrauit,
 Si veteres ita miratur, laudatque Poëta. ni
 Ut nihil anteferat, nihil illis comparer, errat.
 Quod si tam Grecis novitas inuisa fuisset,
 Quam nobis, quid nunc esset verus, aut quis haberet,
 Quod legeret, teneretque viritum publicus usus.*

-oM Horat. Liboll. Ep. 1. vers. 21. & seq.

If Virgil had not dared to trace the steps of Homer, if Horace had not entertained hopes that he might come up to Pindar, what beautiful Pieces had we lost! Homer and Pindar themselves did not at once attain to so high a degree of Perfection. They certainly had before them other Poets, who had opened them the way, and whom at length they excelled. Why may not ours have the same hopes? What great Things did Horace promise himself?

Dicam insigne, recens, adhuc

Indictum ore alio

Nihil parvum, aut humili modo,

Nil mortale loquar.

Lib. III. Od. 11. vers. 7. & seq.

Exegi monumentum ære perennius

Non omnis moriar, multaque pars mei, &c.

Ibid. Od. 30. vers. 1. &c.

Why

Why will we not give all herbe leave to
say in like manner.

Apollon *perdis vietas*, &c.
Lib. 3^o Od. 1^a vers. 141

3. I own the emulation of the Mo-
derns wou'd be dangerous, if it turned to
contempt of the Ancients, and a neglect
of studying them. The true way to con-
quer them, is to improve by all their Ex-
cellencies, and to endeavour to carry
their *Idea* in the Imitation of the beauti-
ful parts of Nature, even further than
they did. I wou'd not scruple to cry out
to all the Authors of our Age whom I
most esteem and honour,
vos exemplaria Græcæ
Nocturna versate manu, versate diurna

Art. Poet. vers. 268.

If ever you are so happy as to overcome
the Ancients, you will owe the Glory of
the Victory to the Ancients themselves.

4. A prudent and a modest Author
shou'd be diffident of himself, and of the
Praises of his most judicious Friends. Self-
Love will naturally mis-lead him a little,
and Friendship carry too far the Admira-
tion

tion of his Friends for his Talents. What
then is he to do? If some Friend, Charm-
ed with his Writings, says to him,

Nescio quid majus nascitur Niade.
Propert. Lib. II. Eleg. ult.

That ought by no means to hinder him
from imitating the great and wise *Virgil*.
That Poet, upon the point of Death,
would have burnt his *Æneid*, which has
been the Instruction and Delight of all
Ages. Whoever, like that Poet, has seen
with a clear view, the Great and the Per-
fect, cannot flatter himself that he has at-
tained it. Nothing can compleatly fill his
Idea, and thorowly satisfy his Delicacy.
Nothing here below is entirely perfect.

Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum.

Horat. Lib. II. Od. 16. vers. 28.

Thus, whoever has seen the true Per-
fection, perceives that he has not equalled
it, and whoever flatters himself that he
has equalled it, has not seen it so distinctly
as he fancies. That Man is of but a nar-
row Capacity, and a vain weak Heart,
that is fully satisfied with Himself, and
with

with his own Performance. The Author that is pleased with himself, is generally pleased Alone.

Quin sine rivali, reque, & tua solus amares.

Idem Art. Poet. vers. 444.

Such an Author may indeed have noble Talents; but he must certainly have more of Imagination than of Judgment and sound Criticism. On the contrary, to form a Poet equal to the Ancients, he shou'd shew a Judgment superior to the brightest and most fruitful Imagination. An Author shou'd resist all his Acquaintance: he shou'd often revise what has been already applauded, and shou'd never forget this Rule,

Nonumque prematur in annum.

Ibid. vers. 388.

5. I am charmed with an Author that vigorously strives to overcome the Ancients, even tho' he never attains so much as to equal them. The Public ought to praise and encourage his Endeavours, be in hopes that in time he may rise yet Higher, and admire what he has already performed

formed that comes but near to the Ancient Models.

Feliciter miles
Ibid. Eclog. VI. vers. 88.

I wou'd have all Parnassus conspire to shower praises on him:

Proxima Phoebo
Versibus ille facit

Virgil. Eclog. VII. vers. 22.
Pastores hecera crescentem ornate poetam.
Ibid. vers. 27.

The more dissent an Author is of himself in consulting with his Friends upon a Piece which he wou'd revise, the more he is to be esteemed.

Hac, qua V. ara necdum perfecta canebat.
Virgil. Eclog. IX. Vers. 28.

I admire an Author that makes this fine Reflection,

Nam neque adhuc V. ara videor, nec dicere Cinnæ Digna, sed argutos inter strepere anser olores.
Ibid. vers. 35. & 36.

Then

Then I wou'd have all Parties unite to
praise him :

Urque viro Phœbi chorus assurrexerit omnis.
Idem Eclog. VI. vers. 66.

If that Author is still disatisfied with
himself, tho' the Public is very well satis-
fied with him, his Taste and his Genius
are superior to the very Work for which
he is admired.

6. I am not afraid to say that the most
Perfect even among the Ancients have
their Faults. Human Nature has in no
Age allowed of absolute Perfection. If I
were obliged to judge of the Ancients up-
on my own Criticism, I shou'd be very
cautious how I decided. The Ancients have
great Advantages : For want of knowing
thorowly their Manners, Language, Taste,
Ideas, we walk in the Dark when we Cri-
ticise them. It is possible we might have
been bolder Censurers of them, if we had
been their Coteemporaries. But I speak
of the Ancients upon the Authority of
the Ancients. *Horace*, that penetrating
Critick, that great Lover of *Homer*, is my
Warrant when I presume to aver that in
a long Poem so great a Poet does some-
times Nod :

*Quandoque bonus dormitat Homerus.
Verum opere in longo fas est obrepere somnum.*

Art. Poet. vers. 359. 360.

Will we be so manifestly prejudiced as to give to Antiquity more than she deserves, and condemn the Opinion of *Horace*, to maintain, contrary to the evidence of the Fact, that *Homer* is never guilty of any Inequality?

7. If I may be free to declare my Sentiments, without any design to contradict those of better Judges; I must confess that I imagine I can see many Faults even in the most valuable of the Ancients. For Instance, I cannot relish the Chorus of their Tragedies; it interrupts the main Action; it cannot be conformable to strict Probability, because certain Scenes will not admit of a number of Spectators. The Speeches of the Chorus are often undetermined and insipid: I cannot help suspecting that this kind of Interlude was introduced before Tragedy had attained to a great degree of Perfection. On the other hand, I observe in the Ancients a great many Witticisms that are far from being delicate. *Cicero*, the great *Cicero* himself, has some very cold Quibblings upon

upon Words; I cannot find any thing of
the Genius of *Horace* in this petty *Satire*.

Prescripti regis Rupilius, atque venenum.

Lib. I. Sat. VII. vers. 1.

We should be apt to gape at Reading it,
if one were not told the Name of the
Author. When I read this Wonderful
Ode of the same Poet.

Qualem ministrum fulminis dicam,

Lib. IV. Od. IV. vers. 1.

I am always sorry to find these Words
in it; *Quibus mos uide deductus*, &c. take
away that Passage, and the Work remains
Perfect and Compleat. Alledge that
Horace meant to imitate *Pindar* in that Pa-
renthesis which is agreeable to the tran-
sport of an Ode; I do not dispute it; but
I am not fond enough of the Imitation,
to relish that Parenthesis, which appears
so cold and so unnecessary. I allow of a
beautiful disorder that proceeds from a
kind of Fury; and that is managed with
a concealed Art. But I cannot approve
of a Distraction only for the sake of a cu-
rious Remark upon an inconsiderable Cir-
cumstance; it deadens the whole Piece.

Cicero's

Cicero's Scurrility against *Mark Antony* does not seem to me to be at all agreeable to the Nobleness and Greatness of his Oratory. His famous Epistle to *Luccius* is full of the grossest and most ridiculous Vanity. There is almost as much in the Letters of *Pliny* the younger: The Ancients are often guilty of an Affectation, which smells rank of what we call Pedantry. It is possible, that for want of certain Informations which true Religion and Philosophy have bestowed upon Us, they admired a little too much divers Things which we do not admire at all.

8. 'Tis very probable that the great Genius's among the Ancients encouraged themselves with the hopes of excelling the Models that were placed before them. For instance, Why might not *Virgil* hope by the Descent of *Aeneas* into Hell in his VI. Book, to out-do that evocation of Ghosts which *Homer* * represents to us in the Country of the *Cimmerians*? It is natural to believe that *Virgil*, notwithstanding his modesty, took pleasure in handling in the IV. Book of his *Aeneid*, something of Original, which *Homer* had not touch'd upon.

9. I confess the Ancients have a very great disadvantage in the Absurdity of their Religion, and the Goodness of their Philosophy. In *Homer's* time their Religion was nothing but a monstrous Heap of Fables, full as ridiculous as the Stories of the *Fairies*. Their Philosophy had nothing in it but what was vain and Superstitious. Before *Socrates*, Morality was very imperfect, tho' the Legislators had laid down excellent Rules for the Government of Nations. Nay, it must be allowed that *Plato* makes *Socrates* argue but weakly upon the Immortality of the Soul. This fine Passage in *Virgil*,

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas &c.

Georg. II. vers. 490.

amounts no higher than to place the Happiness of wise Men in the being able to free themselves from the fear of Omens and of Hell. That Poet promises no other Reward in the next Life to the purest and most heroic Virtue, besides the pleasure of sporting on the Grass, or of fighting upon the Sands, or of dancing and singing of Verses, or of managing Horses, or of driving Chariots and having beautiful Armour. And these Men too, and

and these Shows which were their Amusement, were no more than vain Shadows; nay, and these Shadows groaned with Impatience to re-animate other Bodies, and to begin a new all the Miseries of this Life, which is only a Sickness that brings us to Death, *Mortalibus agris*. Such were the highest Comforts proposed to Mankind by the Ancients;

Pars in graminis exercebat membra palestris.
Idem *Aeneid*. VI. vers. 642.

Qua luce miseris tam dira cupido?

Ibid. vers. 721.

Homers Heroes are not so much as Men of Sense and Honesty, and his Gods are very much inferiour, even to those Heroes that are so unworthy of the *Idea* we have of Men of Sense and Honesty. Nobody wou'd wish to have a Father so vicious as *Jupiter*, nor a Wife so insupportable as *Juno*, and much less so infamous as *Hera*. Who wou'd care for a Friend so brutish as *Mars*, or a Servant so thievish as *Mercury*? These Gods seem to be invented by the Enemy of Mankind, on purpose to give Authority to all manner of Crimes, and to turn the Divinity into Derision. This

was what induced Longinus to say that
 * Homer made Gods of the Men who were
 at the Siege of Troy and that on the contrary,
 of the Gods he made Men. He adds, That
 the Legislator of the Jews, who was no com-
 mon Man, having a right Notion of the
 Greatness and Power of God, has expressed it
 in all its Dignity at the beginning of his Laws,
 by these Words.: " God said, let the Light
 be made, and it was made; let the Earth
 be made, and it was made".

10. It must be owned that there are
 among the Ancients but few excellent Au-
 thors, and that the Moderns have some,
 whose works are Precious. When we do not
 read the Ancients with the greediness of
 a Scholar, nor with design to inform our
 selves of certain Facts, our Taste con-
 fines it self to a small number of Greek
 and Latin Books. There are but very
 few of them Excellent, tho' Letters were
 so long cultivated in those two Nations;
 it is therefore no wonder that our Age,
 which has but just shook off Barbarism,
 shoud have so few French Books that can
 be read over often with great Satisfaction.
 I cou'd easily name many Ancients, as
 Aristophanes, Plautus, Seneca the Tragic,

Sublime Chap. 7.

Lucan,

Lucan, and *Ovid* himself, whom we could
very willingly be without. I could also readily instance a pretty
considerable number of Modern Authors,
whom we relish and admire with good
Reason. But I will name none, for fear of
offending the modesty of those I should
name, and of being unjust to others by not
naming them.

We should on the other hand consider
what may be said to the Advantage of the
Ancients. Besides that we are indebted
to them for the most valuable Performan-
ces we have, we ought to esteem them
even in those Parts which are not wholly
free from Faults. † *Longinus* observes,
that there is great danger of meanness in Dis-
course so often filed and polished. He adds,
that the ground is slippery and dan-
gerous — tho' I have observed several
Faults, says he further, in *Homer*, and in
all the most famous Authors, tho' I am the
Man of the World perhaps that is least pleased
with those Faults, yet I cannot help think-
ing — that they are little negligencies
that escaped them, because their Mind, which
studied only what was Great, cou'd not dwell
upon things more minute — all that is got by not

† Sublime Chap. 27.

committing Faults, is not to be reprov'd. But the Great wins Admiration. That judicious Critic believes 'twas in the decline of Age that *Homer* sometimes nodded a little in the long Narrations of the *Odyssey*. But he adds that this Weakness * is, after all, the Old Age of *Homer*. And indeed, the most careless Strokes of a Great Painter are infinitely superiour to the most laborious Works of mean Artists. The Pedantic Censor has no Taste for the Sublime; he is not at all moved with it. He much rather lays hold of a Word that is set out of its due Place, or a negligent Expression: He sees but by halves the Beauty of a general Design, the Order and Strength that Shine throughout. He had e'en as well vent his Criticism upon the Spelling, or upon the Interrogatory Points or Commas. I pity the Author that falls into his clutches and under his mercy, † *Barbarus has segetes*. The Censor, that is noble in his Censure, is ravished with what is Great in the Piece. He despises, says *Longinus*, || an exact and scrupulous Delicacy. *Horace* is of this Taste:

* Sublime Chap. 7. † *Virgil. Eclog. I.*
 vers. 72. || Sublime 29.

*Verum ubi plura nitent in carmine, non ego
Offendor maculis, quas aut incuria fudit,
Aut humana parum cavit natura.*

Art. Poet. vers. 35th & seq.

Besides, the absurd grossness of the Religion of the Ancients, and the want of a good moral Philosophy under which they labour'd till the time of *Socrates*, is in one sense a very great Honour to Antiquity. It was certainly *Homer's* Business to Draw his Gods just such as Religion taught them to the Word which in those times was Idolatrous. He was to describe Men according to their Manners that then prevailed in *Greece*, and in *Asia Minor*. To blame *Homer* for having copied faithfully after Nature, is to find fault with *M. Mignard*, *M. de Troye*, and *Mr. Rigau* for making their Pictures alike. Is *Adonis* to be drawn like *Jupiter*, *Silenus* like *Apollo*, *Alecto* like *Venus*, *Thersites* like *Achilles*? Is the Court of our Age to be Painted with the Ruffs and Beards of former Reigns? Thus *Homer* being to draw after Truth, How can we forbear admiring the Order, Proportion, Beauty, Strength, Life, Action, and Nature that he has breathed

breathed into all his Pictures? The more his Religion was monstrous and ridiculous, the more he deserves to be admired for having Enobled it by so many magnificent Images. The more the Manners of those Ages was gross, the more we must be amazed at his having given so much strength to what in it self was so irregular, absurd and shocking. What had he not performed if a *Socrates*, an *Aristides*, a *Timoleon*, an *Agis*, a *Cleomenes*, a *Numa*, a *Camilla*, a *Brutus*, a *Marcus Aunelius* had been set before him for an Original?

Many are disgusted with the frugality of Manners which *Homer* describes. But besides that, the Poet keeps close to the Truth in this ancient Simplicity, as in the grossness of the Pagan Religion; we may add, that nothing can be more Lovely than this Life of the first Men. Can those who cultivate their Reason, and admire Virtue, compare the vain and ruinous Luxury which in these days is the Destruction of our Manners, and the Shame of our Nation, to that Happy, that Elegant Simplicity which the Ancients set before our Eyes? When I read *Virgil*, I could wish to be with his old Man whom he shews me

Order, Proportion, Beauty, and Nature that he has breathed

Namque sub Oebalia memini me turribus altis,
 Qua niger humectat flaventia culta Galefus,
 Corycium vidisse senem, cui pauca relictæ
 Jugera ruris erant, nec fertilis illa juvencis
 Nec pecori opportuna seges . . .
 Regum æquabat opes animis: seraque revertens
 Nocte domum, dapibus mensus onerabat inemp-
 tis.

Primus vere rosam, atque autumnò carpere
 poma.

Et cum tristis hyems etiam nunc frigore saxa
 Rumperet, & glacie cursus frangeret aquarum,
 Ille comam mollis jam tum tondebat acanthi,
 Æstatem increpitans seram, Zephyrosque mo-
 rantes.

Georg. IV. vers. 125. & seq.

Has not *Homer* painted *Calypso's* Isle
 and the Gardens of *Alcinous* with Beauty,
 tho' he adorns them neither with Gold
 nor Marble? Is not the constant Employ-
 ment of *Nausica* more estimable than the
 Gaming and Intrigues of the Women of
 our Age? Our Forefathers wou'd have
 blush'd at them; and yet we dare despise
Homer for not having painted these abo-
 minable Manners by way of advance, while
 yet the World was so happy as to be to-
 tally ignorant of them.

Virgil,

Virgil, who had the nearest view of all the Magnificence of Rome, made the Poverty of King Evander look beautiful, and be an Ornament to his Poem :

*Talibus inter se dictis ad tecta subibant
Pauperis Evandri, passimque armenta videbant,
Romanoque foro, & lautis mugire Carinis.
Ut ventum ad sedes, Hæc, inquit, limina victor
Alcides subiit; Hæc illum regia capit.
Aude hospes contemnere opes, & te quoque dig-
num*

*Einge Deo, rebusque veni non asper egenis.
Dixit & angusti subter fastigia tecti
Ingentem Arcam duxit, stratisque locavit
Effultum foliis, & pelle Libystidis urse.*

Æn. VIII. vers. 359. & seq.

The shameful depravity of our Manners hinders us from lifting up our Eyes to admire the Sublimity of these Words, *Aude hospes contemnere opes.*

Titian, who excell'd in Country Pieces, paints a Valley all covered with fresh Herbage, thro' which runs a clear Stream, and edged with steep Mountains and long Prospects that are lost in the Horizon. You never catch him at drawing a rich Parterre with lofty Jets d'eau, and Basins of Marble. Neither does *Kneller* describe haughty

Sena-

Senators busied in nothing but Criminal Intrigues: He represents an innocent Labourer happily in his Rustic Life.

*Deinde satis fluvium inducit, rivosque sequentes,
Et cum exustus ager morientibus aestuat herbis,
Ecce supercilio clivosi tramitis undam*

*Elicet: Illa eadem rancum per levia murmur
Saxa tect, scatebrisque arenis temperat lava.*
Georg. I. vers. 106, & seq.

Virgil ventures so far as to compare a free Peaceable Country Life with the uneasie Pleasures enjoyed by Persons in high Stations. He imagines no Happiness but a Mediocrity, under which a Man may lie equally sheltered from the Envy of the Prosperity and Compassion of the Miseries of Others.

*Illum non populi fascēs, non purpura Regum
Flexit.*

*Neque ille
Aut doluit miserans inopem, aut invidit lubenti.
Quos rami fructus, quos ipsa volentia rura
Sponte tulere sua, carpit, nec ferrea iura, &c.*

Georg. II. vers. 495, &c.

—Horace fled from the Delight and Magnificence of Rome, to give himself up to Solitude.

Omitte

*Omitte mirari beata
Funtum, & opes, strepitumque Roma.*

Lib. III. Od. XXIX. vers. 4, 5.

*Mihi jam non regia Roma,
Sed vacuum Tibur placet, aut imbelles Tarentum.*

Lib. I. Ep. VII. vers. 44.

When the Poets have a mind to Charm
the Imaginations of Men, they lead them
far from populous Cities; they make them
forget the Luxury of their Age; they
carry them back to the golden Age, they
Paint Shepherds dancing upon the Flowry
Grass under the Shade of a Boscage, in a
delicious Season; rather than Turbulent
Courts and Great Men, who are miserable
by means of their very Greatness.

Nothing so much betokens the Corrup-
tion of a Nation, as this disdainful Luxu-
ry, which rejects the Frugality of the An-
cients. It was such a depravity as this
that overthrew Rome. * *Insuevit, says
Salust, amare, potare, signa, tabulas pictas,
vasa calata mirari divitie honori esse
coeperunt bebescere virtus, paupertas
probo haberi domos, atque villas
in urbium modum exedificatas à pri-
vatis compluribus subvorsos montes, maria*

* Bell. Catalin.

*constrata esse, quibus mihi ludibrio videntur
fuisse divitia vescendi causâ, terrâ
marique omnia exquirere.* I am a thousand
times more in love with *Ulysses's* poor
Ithaca, than with a City shining with so
odious a Magnificence. Happy were Man-
kind if they were contented with such
Pleasures as might be purchased without
either Crime, or Ruine! It is our foolish
and destructive Vanity, and not the noble
Simplicity of the Ancients, that ought to
be Corrected.

I do not believe (and perhaps 'tis my
Fault) what several Learned Men have
imagined: They say, that *Homer* has in-
serted in his Poems, the most profound
Policy, the purest Morality, and the most
sublime Theology. I cannot find those
Wonders in them: But I observe in them
a design of Instruction very Useful to the
Greeks, whom he wished to see always
United, and thereby more Powerful than
the *Asiatics*. He shews that *Achilles's* Re-
sentment against *Agamemnon*, occasioned
more Mischiefs to *Greece* than the *Trojan*
Arms.

*Quidquid delirant Reges, plectuntur Achivi.
Seditione, dolis, &c.*

Lib. I. Ep. II. vers. 14
M

It

It was a vain Fancy in the *Platonicians* of the lower Empire; who imposed upon *Julian* to believe they saw so many Allegories and deep Mysteries in the Deities described by *Homer*. Those Mysteries are Chimerical; the Scripture, the Fathers, that confuted Idolatry, the Evidence of the Thing it self, shew it to be an extravagant and monstrous Religion; but *Homer* was not the maker of it. He found it as it was; he could not alter it. He has adorn'd it; he has concealed in his Work a vast deal of Art, he has laid it out in an Order that incessantly awakens the Curiosity of the Reader. He has Painted with Nature, Beauty, Strength, Majesty, and Passion. What more can be wish'd for?

It is Natural for the Moderns, who have a great deal of Elegance, and many ingenious Turns, to flatter themselves that they have excelled the Ancients, who have nothing but simple Nature. But here I beg leave to make a sort of Apologue: The Inventor of that Architecture which is called *Gothic*, and which is said to be that of the *Arabians*, did undoubtedly imagine they had outdone the *Greek* Architects. A *Greek* Structure has no Ornament but what is as Serviceable as it is Ornamen-

Ornamental : The Pieces that are necessary to Support or Cover it, such as the Columns and the Cornish, are made so many Beauties only by their Proportions. Every Thing is simple, Measured ; every Thing is confined to the Necessary. There is in it neither Boldness, nor Caprice to impose upon the Sight. The Proportions are so Just, that nothing appears to be mighty Great, tho' the whole is so. It is all designed for the Satisfaction of true Reason : On the contrary, the *Gothic* Architect raises upon slender Pillars an immense Roof that lifts itself up to the Skies. You wou'd think it was all just ready to tumble, and it stands for many Ages. It is all full of Windows, Roses, and Points : The Stones seems to be pinked and cut out like Children's Paper. Is it not very Probable that the first *Gothic* Architects tickled themselves with the belief that they had by their vain Refinement outdone the *Greek* Simplicity ? Do but change the Names ; put Poets and Orators instead of Architects. *Lucan* certainly imagined he was Greater than *Virgil*. *Seneca* the Tragic fancied he was much more Brilliant than *Sophocles*. *Tasso* might think he had outstript *Virgil* and *Homer*. Those Authors, if they enter-

tained that belief, were deceived; the most excellent Authors of our Age shou'd dread being deceived in the same manner.

I wou'd by no means be thought to set up for Judge, when I speak so freely; I only advise the Men that adorn our Age, not to give way to a Contempt of those who have by so many Ages been admired. I do not cry up the Ancients for Models without any imperfection; I wou'd rob no-body of the hopes of conquering them. I on the contrary earnestly wish to see the Moderns triumph by the Study of those very Ancients whom they shall overcome. But I shou'd exceed the bounds prescribed me, if I took upon me to adjudge the Prize between the Combatants.

*Non nostrum inter vos tantas componere lites,
Et vitula tu dignus, & hic*

Eclog. III. vers. 108, 109.

You pressed me, Sir, to declare my Thoughts. I have less consulted my Ability, than my Zeal for the Society. I have perhaps gone too far, tho' it was not in my intention to say a Word that

could

could make me look partial. It is time
to hold my Peace:

*Phæbus volentem prælia me loqui,
Victas & urbes, increpuit lyrâ,
Ne parua Tyrrhenum per aquor
Vela darem.*

Lib. IV. Od. XV. vers. 1 & seq.
When I would sing of noble Fights,
Of lofty Things in lofty Flights,
Apollo's Harp my Temples struck,
The trembling Strings in Comfort shook, &c.
Creech.

I shall always remain with the most
perfect and sincere Esteem,

S^rR, &c.

P I N I S.



TRAN-



TRANSLATIONS of the
several Passages from
the Classic's refer'd to
in this Work.

Page. 29. *Scribendi recte, &c.*

Sound Judgment is the ground of Wri-
 [ting well :
 And when Philosophy directs your
 [Choice

To proper Subjects rightly understood,
 Words from your Pen will naturally flow ;
 He only gives the proper Characters,
 Who knows the Duty of all Ranks of Men,
 And what we owe to Country, Parents,
 [Friends,
 How Judges, and how Senators should act,
 And what becomes a General to do ;
 These are the likest Copies, which are drawn
 By the Original of human Life.

Roscom. Transl.

Page. 31.

Pag. 31. *Deniq; sit quodvis simplex, &c.*
 Be what you will, so you be still the same.
Rosc.

Pag. 32. ————— *nec lucidus ordo : &c.*
 After a serious and judicious Choice,
 Method and Eloquence will never fail.
 As well the Force as Ornament of Verse,
 Consist in chusing a fit Time for things,
 And knowing when a Muse should be in-
 [dulg'd
 In her full flight, and when she should be
 [curb'd.
Rosc.

Pag. 44. *Pastorum musam, &c.*
 The mournful Muse of two despairing
 [Swains,
 The Love rejected, and the Lover's pains ;
 To which the Salvage *Linxes* listning stood.
 The Rivers stood on heaps, and stopt the
 [running Flood ;
 The hungry Herd their needful Food re-
 [fuse ;
 Of two despairing Swains, I sing the
 [mournful Muse.
Dryden.

Pag. 49. *Vir bonus & prudens, &c.*
 The prudent Care of an Impartial Friend
 Will give you notice of each idle Line,
 Shew

Shew what sounds harsh, and what wants
[Ornament
Or where it is too lavishly bestow'd.

Rosc.

Pag. 51. *Despectus tibi sum, &c.*
My Passion is thy scorn; nor wilt thou
[know
What Wealth I have, what Gifts I can
[bestow,
What stores my Daries and my Folds con-
[tain
A thousand Lambs that wander on the
[Plain,
New Milk that all the Winter never fails,
And all the Summer overflows the Pails.
Amphion sung not sweeter to his Herd,
When summon'd Stones the *Theban* Tur-
[rets rear'd.
Nor am I so deform'd; for late I stood
Upon the Margin of the briny Flood:
The Winds were still, and if the Glass be
[true,
With *Daphnis* I may vie, tho' judg'd by you.
Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Ex noto fictum, &c.*
Begin with Truth, then give Invention
[scope,
And if your Style be natural and smooth,
All

All Men will try, and hope to write as well;
And (not without much Pains) be unde-
ceiv'd.

So much good Method and Connexion may
Improve the common and the plainest
[Things.

Rosc.

Pag. 52. *Muscosi fontes, &c.*

Ye Mossy Springs, inviting easy Sleep,
Ye Trees, whose leafy Shades those mossy
[Fountains keep.

Dryden.

Pag. ibid. *O mihi, &c.*

How light would lie the Turl upon my
(Breast,

If you my Sufferings in your Songs exprest?

Ah! That your Birth and Business had
(been mine

To pen the Sheep, and press the swelling
(Vine.

Dryden.

Page ibid. *Qua pinus ingens, &c.*

There where the Poplar and the stately
(Pine

--Meet in the Shade, and closely twine,

To form the Bow'r with thick intang-
(led Bows,

And where the limpid Stream in curling
(Murmurs flows.

Oldisworth.

Pag.

Pag. 55. *Fortunate senex, &c.*

O Fortunate old Man ! whose Form re-
 [mains
 For you sufficient, and requites your
 [Pains
 Tho' Rushes overspread the Neighb'ring
 [Plains.]

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* O *Fortunatos, &c.*

Oh happy, if he knew his happy State
 The Swain, who free from Business and
 [debate,
 Receives his easie Food from Natures Hand
 And just returns of Cultivated Land.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* . . . at *frigida Tempe* : &c.
 Cool Grotts and living Lakes, the flow'ry
 [Pride

Of Meads, and Streams that thro' the Val-
 [ley glide,

And shady Groves that easie sleep invite
 And after toilsome Days, a soft Repose at

[Night.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* O *rus quando, &c.*

Oh ! when shall I enjoy my Country Seat ?
 Oh ! when remov'd from Noise to quiet

[Peace

Amidst my learned Books, my Sleep and

[Ease ;

While

While Hours do smoothly flow, and free
 [from Strife
 Forget the Troubles of a busy Life?

Creech.

Pag. 57. *Ab miseram Eurydicen, &c.*
 Even then his trembling Tongue invoc'd]
 [his Bride
 With his last Voice *Eurydice* he cry'd,
Eurydice, the Rocks and River Banks]
 [reply'd.]

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Tempus erat, &c.*
 'Twas in the dead of Night when sleep
 [repairs,
 Our Bodies worn with Toils, our Minds
 [with Cares,
 When *Hector's* Ghost before my light ap-
 [pears
 A bloody shroud he seem'd, and bath'd in
 [Tears :
 Such as he was when by *Pelides* slain
Thessalian Coursers drag'd him o'er the
 [Plain,
 Swoln were his Feet ; as when the Thongs
 [were thrust
 Through the bord' Holes, his Body black
 [with Dust,
 Unlike that *Hector*, who return'd from
 [Toils
 Of War Triumphant, in *Æacian* Spoils
 Or

Or him, who made the fainting *Greeks* re-
[tire,
And launch'd against their Navy *Phrygian*
[Fire.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *O mihi sola mei, &c.*
Thou call'st my lost *Astyanax* to mind,
In Thee his Features, and his Form I find,
His Eyes so sparkled with a lively Flame }
Such were his Motions, such was all his
[Frame,

And ah! had Heaven so pleas'd, his
[Years had been the Same.]

Dryden.

Pag. 58. --- *cadit & Ripheus, &c.*
Then *Ripheus* follow'd, in th' unequal Fight
Just of his Word, observant of the Right
Heav'n thought not so--- *Dryden.*

Pag. *ibid.* *Tum pavida, &c.*
The fearful Matrons run from Place to
[Place,
And kiss the Thresholds, and the Posts em-
[brace.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Vidi Hecubam, &c.*
——— I saw th' unhappy Queen
The hunder'd Wives and where old *Priam*
[stood
To stain his hallow'd Altars with his Blood.

Dryden.

Pag. 59.

Page 59. *Armatus, &c.*

In arms, diffus'd, invests his Limbs decay'd
Like them, with Age; a late and useless

His feeble Shoulders scarce the Weight
[Aid;
[sustain;

Loaded, not arm'd, he creeps along, with

Despairing of Success, ambitious to be slain.
[Pain

Dryden.

Page 59. *Sic farus, &c.*

This said, his feeble Hand a Javelin threw
Which flut'ring seem'd to loiter as it flew
Just, and but barely, to the Mark it held,
And faintly tinkled on the Brazen Shield.

Dryden.

Page 60. *Nunc morere, &c.*

Now die, with that he drag'd the trem-
[bling Sire,

Slid'ring thro' clotted Blood, and holy
[Mire.

(The mingled Paste, his murder'd Son had
[made,)

Haw'd from beneath the violated Shade,
And on the sacred Pile, the Royal Victim

flaid

His right Hand held his bloody Fauchion

[bare;

His left he twitted in his hoary Hair,

Diag'd

N

Then

Then with a speeding thrust his Heart

The lukewarm Blood came rushing thro'

[the Wound,

And sanguin Streams distain'd the sa-
[cred Ground.]

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Hæc finis Priami, &c.*

Thus Priam fell, and shar'd one common
[Fate

With Troy in Ashes, and his ruin'd
[State:

He, who the Scepter of all Asia sway'd,
Whom Monarchs like Domestick slaves

[obey'd;

On the black Shoar, now lies th' aban-
[don'd King,

A headless Carcass, and a nameless Thing.

Dryden.

Pag. 60. *Jamque pedem, &c.*

All dangers past, at length the lovely Bride,
In safety goes with her melodious Guide;
Longing the common Light again to share,
And draw the vital Breath of upper Air.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Ille, Quis & me, &c.*

Then thus the Bride; what Fury seiz'd on
[Thee
Unhappy Man! to lose thy Self and Me?

Then

N

Dragg'd

Dragg'd back again, by cruel Destinies,
 An Iron Slumber shuts my swimming Eyes:
 And now farewell, involv'd in shades of
 [Night,
 For ever am I ravish'd from thy Sight;
 In vain I reach my feeble Hands to join
 In sweet Embraces ah ! no longer Thine !

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Propter aqua*, &c.
 Faint at the last, she seeks the weedy Pools,
 To quench her Thirst, and on the Rushes
 [crouls,
 Careless of Night, unmindful to return.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Hinc laus visuli*, &c.
 The thriven Calves in Meads their Food
 [forsake,
 And render their sweet Souls before the
 [plenteous Rack :
 The Victor Horse, forgetful of his Food,
 The Palm renounces, and abhors the Flood :
 He paws the Ground, and on his hanging

[Ears,

A doubtful Sweat in clammy Drops ap-
 [pears,
 Parch'd is his Hide, and rugged are his

[Hairs,

The Steer, who to the Yoke was bred to
 [bow,
 (Studios of Tillage; and the crooked
 [Plough)
 Falls down and dies; and dying spews a
 [Flood
 Of foamy Madness, mixed with clotted
 [Blood.

The Clown, who cursing Providence re-
 [pines
 His mournful Fellow from the Team dis-
 [joins,
 With many a Groan forsakes his fruitless
 [care,
 And in th'unfinish'd Furrow leaves the
 [share.

The pining Steer, no Shades of lofty
 [Woods
 Nor flow'ry Meads can ease; nor Crystal
 [Floods
 Could from the Rock—

Dryden.
 Pag. 61. *Exiit ad Cælum, &c.*

the laden Boughs arise;
 With happy Fruit advancing to the Skies;
 The Mother Plant admires the Trees
 [unknown,
 Of Alien Trees, and Apples not her own.

Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* *Purpureus velut* &c. *ibid.* *pag.*

His snowy Neck reclines upon his Breast,
Like a fair Flow'r by the keen Shade on
[press'd.

Pag. *ibid.* *Inque novos*, &c. *Dryd.*

With kindly Moisture then the Plants a-
[bound

The Grass securely Springs above the
[Ground.

Pag. 62. *Qualis populea*, &c. *Dryden.*

So close in poplar Shades, her Childrea
[gone,

The Mother Nightingale laments alone,
Whose Nest some prying Churl had
[found, and thence

By stealth convey'd th' unfeather'd Imo-
[cence:

But she supplies the Night with mournful
[Strains,

And melancholly Musick fills the Plains.
Dryden.

Pag. *ibid.* ——— *Fugit retro*, &c.

But see our Years do swiftly move,
Our nimble Youth and Beauty fades,

Dry Age with Cares will crowd our
[Heads,

And leave no room for easy Rest and
[Love.

Crotch.

Pag. *ibid.* *Quid Paris? uti Chidi*

He can't be happy if he lives alone,
His Kingdom can't content, when she is

Gone.
Achilles and *Achilles* chide, and hate, &c.
Creech.

Pag. 62. *De terrarum, &c.*

There's not a Corner of the Earth
So form'd for Plenty, Joy and Mirth;
No richer Land, no better Soil,
Afford such Honey or such Oil:
Here you and I may gently pass,
The sweet Remainder of our Days,
Here, when your Friend, your *Horace*
[dies,
You shall observe his Obsequies,
Kindly his glowing Ashes mourn,
And drop a Tear into his Urn,

Oldisworth.

Pag. *ibid.* *aspera multa, &c.*

And while thro' raging Seas he ventur'd
[Home,
Met thousand Dangers, and did over-
come.

Creech.

Pag. *ibid.* *Duris ut ilex, &c.*

Now, like an Oak on some cold Moun-
[tains brow,
At ev'ry Wound they sprout and grow:
The

The Ax and Sword new Vigour give,
And by their Ruins they revive; &c. *Crech.*

Pag. 74. As Tragic; &c.
Or is he writing Plays, and treads the
In murdering Verse, and swells with Tra-
gick Rage. *Crech.*

Pag. 74. Brutus, &c.
Forget their swelling and Gigantic Words.
Pag. ibid. Parate subjects, &c.
To tame the Proud, the fetter'd Slave to
Well, *Crech.*

Pag. 75. Imperat. bellante, &c.
Caesar his suppliant Foes shall raise,
And his victorious Arms succeed.

Pag. 77. Na. quicunque, &c.
Not to bring a God or Hero down,
Or make a Person graced with Robe and
Talk common Talk, and sink into a
Clown:

Or while he doth affect a lofty height,
Fly up in Bombast, and soar out of sight.
Pag. 79.

Pag. 79. *At hostri phavori, &c.* A. and T.
 'Tis true, as I have heard, the former
 [Times,
 Clapt *Plautus*' wanton and uneven Rhimes
 With too much Patience, both (to say no
 [more
 And call it Bolly) those our Fathers bore.
Creech.

Pag. ibid. *Sic cogitabam, &c.*
 For thought I, He that is so much
 mov'd, and upon such slender Acquaint-
 ance; What if she had been his Mistress?
 How wou'd he take on if I should die?
 — The dead Body is brought out, the
 Company moves. — Well, well,
 thought I, the whole Business is unravell'd,
 and the Tears and Whining are no longer
 a Mystery.
Echard.

Pag. 80. *Memor essem, &c.*
 Forget her, say ye? O *Myssis*, *Myssis*, what
Crysis spake to me about her Sister, is to
 this Day engraven on my Heart: She was
 just dying, I remember, when she called;
 I went to her, you among ye withdrew,
 we alone, she thus began: My *Pamphilus*,
 you see the Youth and Beauty of this poor
 Girl — Now by this Hand of yours,
 and your natural Goodness, I beg of you,
 I adjure you by the Faith you have given
 this

this poor Creature, and by her solitary Condition, to be true to her, and never forsake her; — if you have ever been to me as my own Brother; if you are the Man in the World whom she ever most esteem'd; if she never denied you any thing that she could grant you, I now bequeath her to her for a Husband, a Friend, a Guardian, and a Father too — With these Words she join'd our Hands, and in the very Action died. I receiv'd her, and am resolv'd to keep her.

Echard.

Pag. 81. *Nique Vinga, &c.* I'm undone! the pretty Creature's lost — and so am I — who have unluckily mist on her. Where shall I look for her? Where shall I trace her? Whom shall I ask for her? What blind Alley shall I range in? I'm in a strange Quondary! I've this Comfort left, that she can't be long incognito — where ever she be.

Echard.

Pag. 82. *Ego equis, &c.* What can I desire further; but that tho' the Captain has your Company, yet your Heart may be at another Place.

Echard.

Pag. 86. *Semper ad eventum, &c.* He always hastens on to the Event, — And still the middle of the Tale presents

As

As ^{if} were the first; then draws the
 Taven has, ^{and} ^{of} ^{ent} ^{ed} ^o [Reader on,
 Till the whole Story is exactly known;
 And what he can't improve he lets alone.

Page 88. *Ordinis huius virtus, &c.*

As well the Force as Ornament of Verse
 Consist in chusing a fit Time for Things.

Page 100. *Et nisi quæ terris, &c.*

In this, 'tis true, thy Rome is wise and just,
 But not in other Thing; the ancient

[Plays,
 And Foreign Poets only she can praise.

But if because the oldest are the best
 Among the *Greeks*, the same unequal Test
 Must try the *Latins* too.

Come tell me then, I would be gladly
 How many Years will make a Poem good?

who esteems by Years,

A Poem's goodness from the Date it bears;
 Who nor admires, nor yet approves a

But what is old, and Death has made Di-
 I can confute.

'Tis not to praise the Old; but scorn,
 And hate new Books, and damn the Mo-

And hate new Books, and damn the Mo-

Eden Muse:
 Had

Had Greece done thus, had she still scorn'd
 What had been Old ? What worthy pub-
 lick Views.

Creech.

Pag. 101. *Dicam insigne, &c.*
 Give me a Theme that's great and new,
 Untouch'd by any other Muse ;
 I scorn what's human, mean, and low,
 Nor will attempt a mortal Strain.

Pag. *ibid.* *Exegi Monumentum, &c.*

I have rais'd a Monument
 More strong than Brass, and of a vast
 extent ;
 Whole *Honour* shall not die, his Songs
 shall save
 The greatest Portion, from the greedy
 Grave.

Pag. 102. *vos exemplaria, &c.*
 Consider well the Greek Originals ;
 Read them by Day, and think of them
 [by Night.

Pag. 103. *Nihil est, &c.*
 Nothing is compleatly blest.

Oldisworth.

Pag. 104.

Pag. 104. *Quint sine, &c.* *had*
 With silence leave you to admire your
 And without Rival hug your darling Book,
Rosc.

Pag. ibid. *Namque, &c.*
 Not see the Light,
 Till Time; and Care have ripen'd out by

Pag. 105. *Hasque, &c.*
 What unfinish'd, He to Varrus read.

Pag. ibid. *Namque, &c.*
 I, nor to Cincinnatus, but, nor to *Quint* dare
 But gabble like a Goose amidst the Swan
 [aspire,
 [like Quire.

Pag. 106. *Usque Viro, &c.*
 The Senate rising to salute their Guest.

Pag. 107. *Quandque bonis, &c.*
 But in long Weeks Sleep with sometimes
 [surprise;
Homex himself hath been observ'd to Nod.

Pag. 108. *Proscripti, &c.*
 How munguel *Persius* paid *Rupilius* off.

Creeth.

Pag. ibid.

Pag. 116. *Qualis in illis, &c.*
The Royal Bird, to whom the King of
[Heaven,
The Empire of the Feather'd Race has
[given

Creech.

Pag. 116. *Felis qui patitur, &c.*
Happy the Man, who studying Nature's
[Laws,
Thro' known Effects can trace the secret
[Cause.

Dryden.

Pag. 117. *Pars in gramina, &c.*
Their airy Limbs in Sports they exercise.
[And when cold Winter spurs the Rocks in
[Covert lazy Limbs and mortal Breath.

Dryden.

Pag. 117. *Populus, &c.*
But in a Poem elegantly writ,
I will not quarrel With a slight Mistake,
Such as our Nature's Frailty may excuse.

Rosc.

Pag. 117. *Namque sub, &c.*
For where with Ratchy Powers Tarentum
[Rands,
And deep Galeas soaks the yellow Sands;
I chanced an old Corymb Swain to know
Unfit for Sheep or Vines, and more unfit
[to Sow;

Yet

Yet lab'ring well his little Spot of Ground,
 Some scattering Pot-herbs here and there
 [He found ;
 Which cultivated with his daily Care,
 And bruis'd with Vervain, were his frugal
 [Fare ;
 For late returning Home, he supp'd at
 [Ease,
 And wisely deem'd the Wealth of Mo-
 [narchs less
 The little of his own, because his own,
 [did please :]
 To quit his Care, he gather'd first of all
 In Spring the Roses, Apples in the Fall :
 And when cold Winter split the Rocks in
 [Twain,
 And Ice the running Rivers did restrain ;
 He stripp'd the Bear's Foot of its leafy
 [Growth
 And calling Western Winds, accus'd the
 [Spring of Sloth.
 Dryden.

Pag. 118. *Talibus inter, &c.*
 Discourſing thus together, they reſort
 Where poor Evander kept his Country
 [Court
 They view'd the Ground of Rome's litigious
 [Hall
 Once Oxen low'd, where now the Law-
 [yers bawl ;
 Then

Then stooping thro' the narrow Gate
 [they prest,
 When thus the King bespoke his Trojan
 [Guest:
 Mean as it is, this Palace, and this Door
 Receiv'd Alcides, then a Conqueror
 Dare to be Poor: Accept our Homely
 [Food
 Which feasted him; and emulate a God.
 Then underneath a lowly Roof, he led
 The weary Prince, and laid him on a
 Bed,
 The stuffing Leaves, with Hides of Bears
 [overspread;
 Dryden
 Pag. 190 *Deinde faris, &c.*
 Call the Floods from high, to rush
 [remain
 With pregnant Streams, to swell the
 [teeming Grain:
 Then when the fiery Suns too fiercely
 [play,
 And shrivell'd Herbs on with'ring Stems
 [decay;
 The wary Plowman, on the Mountains
 [brow,
 Undams his Wathy Stores, huge Tor-
 [rents flow,
 And
 O 2

And rath'ring down the Rocks, [large Mol-
[sture yield,
Temp'ring the thirsty Heaven of the Field.
Dryden.

Pag. ibid. *Humanae populi, &c.*
Whose Mind unmov'd the Bribes of Courts
[can see,
Their glittering Baits, and purple Sla-
[every;
Nor hopes the People's Praise, nor fears
[their Frowns;

Nor envies he the Rich their happy Store,
Nor his own Peace disturbs with Pity for
[the Poor;
He feeds on Fruits, which of their own
[accord
The willing Ground, and laden Trees af-
[ford;
From his lov'd Home no Lucre him can
[draw,
The Senates mad Decrees he never saw,
Nor heard, at bawling Bars, [corrupted
[Law.]

Dryden.
Pag. 120. *Omitte mirari, &c.*

~~Admire no more~~
The Wealth, the Noise, and Smoak of
[Rome.
Creach.
Pag. ibid.

Pag. ibid. Sed vacuum, &c.

Unmov'd I see
Rome's Temp and State, they are no
[Charms to me;
But unfrequented Tyne's quiet Ease,
The shady Plains, and soft Tamar please.

Crucis.

N A

ESSAY

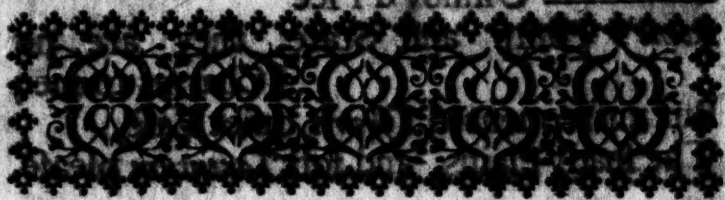


EDY.

HUM

MR. DAWVIS.

Dear Sir,
I write to you, that you have
certainly not less than three
of several Authors; and your
Observation is, that there is more of the
in our English Writers, than in any
of the other Comic Poets, Ancient or
Modern.



A N

ESSAY

Concerning
HUMOUR IN COMEDY.
To
Mr. DENNIS.

Dear SIR,

YOU write to me, that you have
Entertain'd your self two or three
Days, with reading several Co-
medies, of several Authors; and your
Observation is, that there is more of *Humour* in our *English* Writers, than in any
of the other Comick Poets, Ancient or
Mo-

Modern. You desire to know my Opinion, and at the same time my Thoughts, of that which is generally call'd *Humour* in Comedy.

I agree with you, in an impartial Preference of our *English* Writers, in that Particular. But if I tell you my Thoughts of *Humour*, I must at the same time confess, that what I take for true *Humour*, has not been so often written even by them as is generally believed: And some who have valued themselves, and have been esteem'd by others, for that kind of Writing, have seldom touch'd upon it. To make this appear to the World, would require a long and labour'd Discourse, and such as I neither am able nor willing to undertake. But such little Remarks as may be contain'd within the Compass of a Letter, and such unremeditated Thoughts, as may be Communicated between Friend and Friend, without incurring the Censure of the World, or setting up for a Dictator, you may have from me, since you have injoin'd it.

To define *Humour*, perhaps, were as difficult, as to define *Wit*: for like that, it is of infinite variety. To enumerate the several *Humours* of Men, were a Work as endless, as to sum up their several

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ral Opinions. And in my mind the *Quæ
homines et Sententia*, might have been more
 properly interpreted of *Humour*; since
 there are many Men, of the same Opi-
 nion in many things, who are quite diffe-
 rent in *Humours*. But tho' we cannot cer-
 tainly tell what *Wit* is, or what *Humour*
 is, yet we may go near to shew something,
 which is not *Wit*, or not *Humour*; and yet
 often mistaken for both. And since I
 have mentioned *Wit* and *Humour* toge-
 ther, let me make the first Distinction
 between them, and observe to you, that
Wit is often mistaken for *Humour*.
 I have observed, that when a few things
 have been *Wittily* and *Pleasantly* spoken
 by any Character in a Comedy; it has
 been very usual for those, who make their
 Remarks on a Play, while it is acting, to
 say, *Such a Thing is very Humorously spoken*.
*There is a great deal of Humour in that
Part.* Thus the Character of the Person
 speaking, may be, surprizingly and plea-
 santly, mistaken for a Character of *Hu-
mour*, which indeed is a Character of *Wit*.
 But there is a great difference between a
 Comedy, wherein there are many things
Humorously, as they call it, which is *Plea-
santly* spoken; and one, where there are
 several Characters of *Humour*, distinguish'd
 by

by the particular and different *Humours*, appropriated to the several Persons represented, and which naturally arise, from the different Constitutions, Complexions, and Dispositions of Men. The saying of *Humourous Things*, does not distinguish Characters; for every Person in a Comedy may be allow'd to speak them. From a *Witty Man* they are expected; and even a *Fool* may be permitted to stumble on 'em by chance. Tho' I make a Difference betwixt *Wit* and *Humour*; yet I do not think that *Humourous Characters* exclude *Wit*: No, but the Manner of *Wit* should be adapted to the *Humour*. As for Instance; a Character of a *Splenetic* and *Peevish Humour*, should have a *Satyrical Wit*. A *Jolly* and *Sanguine Humour*, should have a *Facetious Wit*. The former should speak *Positively*; the latter, *Carelessly*: For the former observes and shews Things as they are, the latter, rather over-looks Nature, and speaks Things as he would have them; and his *Wit* and *Humour* have both of them a less Alloy of Judgment than the others.

As *Wit*, so, its opposite, *Folly*, is sometimes mistaken for *Humour*.

When a Poet brings a Character on the Stage, committing a thousand Absurdities,

and

and talking Impertinencies, roaring aloud, and Laughing immoderately, on every, or rather upon no occasion; this is a Character of *Humour*.

Is any thing more common, than to have a pretended Comedy, stuff'd with such Grotesque-Figures, and Farce-Fools? Things, that either are not in Nature, or if they are, are Monsters, and Births of Mischance; and consequently as such, should be stifled, and huddled out of the way, like *Sootykins*; that Mankind may not be shock'd with an appearing Possibility of the Degeneration of a God-like Species. For my part, I am as willing to laugh, as any body, and as easily diverted with an Object truly ridiculous; but at the same time, I can never care for seeing things, that force me to entertain low Thoughts of my Nature. I don't know how it is with others, but I confess freely to you, I could never look long upon a Monkey, without very mortifying Reflections; tho' I never heard any thing to the contrary, why that Creature is not Originally of a distinct Species. As I don't think *Humour* exclusive of *Wit*, neither do I think it inconsistent with *Folly*; but I think the Follies should be only such, as *Mens Humours* may incline 'em to; and not

not Bodies intirely abstracted from both
Humour and Nature.

Sometimes, *Personal Defects*, are misre-
presented for *Humours*.
I mean sometimes Characters are bar-
barously exposed on the Stage, ridiculing
Natural Deformities, Casual Defects in the
Senses, and Infirmities of Age. Sure the
Poet must both be very ill-natur'd himself
and think his Audience so, when he pro-
poses by shewing a Man Deform'd, or
Deaf, or Blind, to give them an agreeable
Entertainment, and hopes to raise their
Mirth by what is truly an Object of Com-
passion. But much need not be said upon
this Head to any body, especially to you,
who in one of your Letters to me con-
cerning Mr. *Johnston's FOX*, have justly ex-
cepted against this Immortal part of *Ri-
dicule* in *Comastio's* Character, and there-
in must agree with you to blame him,
whom otherwise I cannot enough admire,
for his great Mastery of true Humour in
Comedy.

External Habit of Body is often mistaken
for Humour.

By *External Habit*, I do not mean the
Ridiculous Dress, or Cloathing, of a Cha-
racter, tho' that goes a good way in some
received Characters. (But undoubtedly a
Man's

Man's *Humour* may incline him to Dress differently from other People. But I mean a Singularity of Manners, Speech, and Behaviour, peculiar to all, or most of the same Country, Trade, Profession, or Education. I cannot think, that, a *Humour*, which is only a Habit, or Disposition contracted by Use or Custom, or by a Disuse or Compliance with other Customs, it may be worn off or diversified. I think that *Affectation* is generally mistaken for *Humour*.

These are indeed so much alike, that at a distance, they may be mistaken one for the other. For what is *Humour* in one, may be *Affectation* in another; and nothing is more common, than for some to affect particular ways of saying, and doing things, peculiar to others, whom they admire and would imitate. *Humour* is the Life, *Affectation* the Picture. He that draws a Character of *Affectation*, shows *Humour*; at the Second-hand; he gets the best but publishes a Translation, and his Pictures are but Copies.

But as these two last distinctions are the nicest, so it may be most proper to explain them, by particular Instances from some Author of Reputation. I take, either to be born with it, and fit
of

of a Natural Growth; or else to be grafted into us, by some accidental change in the Constitution, or Revolution of the Internal Habit of Body; by which it becomes, if I may so call it, Naturaliz'd.

Humour is from Nature, *Habit* from Custom; and *Affectation* from Industry.

Humour, shews us as we are.

Habit, shews us, as we appear, under a forcible Impression.

Affectation, shews what we would be, under a voluntary Disguise.

Tho' here I would observe by the way, that a continued *Affectation* may in time become a *Habit*.

The Character of *MOROSE* in the *Silent-Woman*, I take to be a Character of *Humour*. And I chuse to instance this Character to you, from many others of the same Author, because I know it has been Condemn'd by many as Unnatural and Farce: And you have your self hinted some dislike of it, for the same Reason, in a Letter to me, concerning some of *Johnson's* Plays.

Let us suppose *MOROSE* to be a Man naturally Splenatick and Melancholly; is there any thing more offensive to one of such a Disposition than Noise and Clamour? Let any Man that has the Spleen

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(and there are enough in *England*) be Judge. We see common Examples of this *Humour* in little, every Day. 'Tis ten to one, but three parts in four of the Company that you Dine with, are discomposed and startled at the Cutting of a Cork, or scratching a Plate with a Knife; It is a Proportion of the same *Humour*, that makes such or any other Noise offensive to the Person that hears it; for there are others who will not be disturb'd at all by it. Well; but *MOROSE* you will say, is so extravagant, he cannot bear any Discourse or Conversation, above a Whisper. Why, It is his excess of this *Humour*, that makes him become Ridiculous, and qualifies his Character for Comedy. If the Poet had given him but a moderate proportion of that *Humour*, 'tis odds but half the Audience, would have sided with the Character, and have condemned the Author, for exposing a *Humour* which was neither Remarkable nor Ridiculous. Besides, the distance of the Stage requires the Figure represented, to be something larger than the Life; and sure a Picture may have Features larger in proportion, and yet be very like the Original. If this Exactness of Quantity were to be observ'd in *Wit*, as some would have it in *Humour*;

Humour; what would become of those Characters that are design'd for Men of Wit? I believe if a Poet should steal a Dialogue of any length from the *Extempore* Discourse of the two wittiest Men upon Earth, he would find the Scene but coldly receiv'd by the Town. But to the purpose,

The Character of Sir John Daw in the same Play, is a Character of *Affectation*. He every where discovers an *Affectation* of Learning; when he is not only conscious to himself, but the Audience also plainly perceives that he is Ignorant. Of this kind are the Characters of *Thrase* in the *EUNUCH* of Terence, and *Pyrgopolinices* in the *MILES GLORIOSUS* of Plautus. They affect to be thought Valiant, when both themselves and the Audience know they are not. Now such a boasting of Valour in Men who were really Valiant, would undoubtedly be a *Humour*; for a fiery Disposition might naturally throw a Man into the same Extravagance, which is only *affected* in the Characters I have mentioned.

The Character of COB in *Every Man in his Humour*, and most of the under Characters in *Bartholomew-Fair* discover only a singularity of Manners, appropri-

ted to the several Educations and Professions of the Persons represented. They are not *Humours* but *Habits* contracted by Custom. Under this Head may be rang'd all Country-Clowns, Sailors, Tradesmen, Jockeys, Gamesters, and such like; who make use of *Cants* or peculiar *Dialects* in their several Arts and Vocations. One may almost give a Réceipt for the Composition of such a Character: For the Poet has nothing to do, but to collect a few proper Phrases and Terms of Art, and to make the Person apply them by ridiculous Metaphors in his Conversation, with Characters of different Natures. Some late Characters of this kind have been very successful; but in my mind they may be Painted without much Art or Labour; since they require little more, than a good Memory and superficial Observation. But true *Humour* cannot be shewn, without a Dissection of Nature, and a narrow Search, to discover the first Seeds, from whence it has its Root and Growth.

If I were to write to the World, I should be obliged to dwell longer, upon each of these Distinctions and Examples; for I know that they would not be plain enough to all Readers. But a bare hint is sufficient

to inform you of the Notions which I have on this Subject: And I hope by this time you are of my Opinion, that *Humour* is neither *Wit*, nor *Folly*, nor *Personal Defect*, nor *Affectation*, nor *Habit*; and yet, that each, and all of these, have been both written and received for *Humour*.

I should be unwilling to venture even on a bare Description of *Humour*, much more to make a Definition of it; but now my hand is in, I will tell you what serves me instead of either. I take it to be, *a singular and unavoidable manner of doing, or saying any thing, Peculiar and Natural to one Man only; by which his Speech and Actions are distinguished from those of other Men*.

Our *Humour* has relation to us, and to what proceeds from us, as the Accidents have to a Substance; it is a Colour, Taste, and Smell, diffused through all; tho' our Actions are never so many, and different in Form, they are all Splinters of the same Wood, and have naturally one Complexion; which tho' it may be disguised by Art, yet cannot be wholly changed. We may Paint it with other Colours, but we cannot change the Grain. So the Natural found of an Instrument will be distinguished,

guish'd; tho' the Notes expressed by it are never so various, and the Divisions never so many. Dissimulation, may by degrees, become more easy to our Practice; but it can never absolutely Transubstantiate us into what we would seem: It will always be in some proportion a Violence upon Nature.

A Man may change his Opinion, but I believe he will find it a Difficulty, to part with his *Humour*, and there is nothing more provoking, than the being made sensible of that difficulty. Sometimes, one shall meet with those, who perhaps, innocently enough, but at the same time impertinently, will ask the Question, *Why are you not Merry? Why are you not Gay, Pleasant, and Cheerful?* then instead of answering, could I ask such a one; *Why are you not handsome? Why have you not black Eyes, and a better Complexion?* Nature abhors to be forced.

The two famous Philosophers of *Ephesus* and *Abdera*, have their different Sects at this Day. Some Weep, and others Laugh at one and the same thing.

I don't doubt, but you have observed several Men Laugh when they are Angry: others who are Silent; some that are Loud: Yet I cannot suppose that it is the Passion

Passion of *Anger* which is in it self different, or more or less in one than t'other; but that it is the *Humour* of the Man that is predominant, and urges him to express it in that manner. Demonstrations of Pleasure are as various; one Man has a *Humour* of retiring from all Company, when any thing has happen'd to please him beyond Expectation; he hugs himself alone, and thinks it an Addition to the Pleasure to keep it Secret. Another is upon Thorns till he has made Proclamation of it; and must make other People sensible of his Happiness, before he can be so himself. So it is in Grief, and other Passions, Demonstrations of Love, and the Effects of that Passion upon several *Humours*, are infinitely different; but here the Ladies who abound in Servants are the best Judges. Talking of the Ladies, we think something should be observed of the *Humour* of the Fair Sex; since they are sometimes so kind as to furnish out a Character for Comedy. But I must confess I have never made any Observation of what I apprehend to be true *Humour* in Women. Perhaps Passions are too powerful in that Sex, to let *Humour* have its Course; or may be by Reason of their Natural Coldness, *Humour* cannot exert it self to that
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extravagant Degree, which it often does in the Male Sex. For if ever any thing does appear Comical or Ridiculous in a Woman, I think it is little more than an acquired Folly, or an Affectation. We may call them, the weaker Sex, but I think the true Reason is, because our Follies are stronger, and our Faults are more prevailing.

One might think that the Diversity of *Humour*, which must be allowed to be diffused throughout Mankind, might afford endless Matter, for the support of Comedy. But when we come closely to consider that Point, and nicely to distinguish the *Difference of Humours*, I believe we shall find the contrary. For tho' we allow every Man something of his own, and a peculiar *Humour*; yet every Man has it not in quantity to become Remarkable by it: Or, if many do become Remarkable by their *Humours*; yet all those *Humours* may not be diverting. Nor is it only requisite to distinguish what *Humour* will be diverting, but also how much of it, what part of it to shew in Light, and what to cast in Shades; how to set it off by preparatory Scenes, and by *opposing* other *Humours* to it in the same Scene. Through a wrong Judgment sometimes, Mens *Humours* may
be

be opposed when there is really no specific Difference between them ; only a greater proportion of the same, in one than t'other, occasion'd by his having more Fleghm or Choler, or whatever the Constitution is, from whence their *Humours* derive their Source.

There is infinitely more to be said on this Subject ; tho' perhaps I have already said too much ; but I have said it to a Friend, who I am sure will not expose it, if he does not approve of it. I believe the Subject is intirely New, and was never touch'd upon before ; and if I would have any one to see this private *Essay*, it should be some one, who might be provoked by my Errors in it, to publish a more Judicious Treatise on the Subject, Indeed I wish it were done, that the World being a little acquainted with the scarcity of true *Humour*, and the difficulty of finding and shewing it, might look a little more favourably on the Labours of them, who endeavour to search into Nature for it, and lay it open to the publick View.

I don't say but that very entertaining and useful Characters, and proper for Comedy, may be drawn from *Affectation*, and those other Qualities, which I have endeavoured

voured to distinguish from *Humour*: but I would not have such imposed on the World, for *Humour*, nor esteem'd of equal Value with it. It were perhaps, the Work of a long Life to make one Comedy true in all its Parts, and to give every Character in it a true and distinct *Humour*. Therefore, every Poet must be beholding to other Helps, to make out his Number of ridiculous Characters. But I think such a One deserves to be broke, who makes all false Musters; who does not shew one true *Humour* in a Comedy, but entertains his Audience to the end of the Play with every thing out of Nature.

I will make but one Observation to you more, and have done; and that is grounded upon an Observation of your own, and which I mentioned at the beginning of my Letter, *viz.* That there is more of *Humour* in our *English* Comick Writers than in any others. I do not at all wonder at it, for I look upon *Humour* to be almost of *English* Growth; at least, it does not seem to have found such increase on any other Soil. And what appears to me to be the Reason of it, is the great Freedom, Privilege, and Liberty which the Common People of *England* enjoy. Any Man that has a *Humour*, is under no restraint,

strait, or fear of giving it Vent; they have a Proverb among them, which, may be will shew the Bent and Genius of the People, as well as a longer Discourse: *He that will have a May-pole, shall have a May-pole.* This is a Maxim with them, and their Practice is agreeable to it. I believe something considerable too may be ascrib'd to their feeding so much on Flesh, and the Grossness of their Diet in general. But I have done, let the Physicians agree that. Thus you have my Thoughts of *Humour*, to my Power of expressing them in so little Time and Compass. You will be kind to shew me wherein I have Err'd; and as you are very capable of giving me Instruction, so, I think I have a very just Title to demand it from you; being, without Reserve,

July 10.
1695.

Your real Friend,

and humble Servant,

W. CONGREVE.

THE

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